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NOTES AND NEWS.

PARLIAMENT adjourns on Tuesday next for the Easter recess, and no adequate debate has yet taken place upon the grossly oppressive changes in the law of sedition recently hurried through the Legislative Council at Calcutta, although on February 18 Lord G. Hamilton stated in the House of Commons that a legitimate and proper opportunity for discussion would arise when the text of the opinions expressed in the Legislative Council was received in this country. We comment elsewhere upon the grave responsibility which the Front Opposition Bench will incur if—especially after the stand taken by Sir William Harcourt last July—it permits Lord G. Hamilton to sanction the measures without a protest. It looks as if the apathy of Sir Henry Fowler had once again tied the tongues of his colleagues in the late Liberal Government. But the Front Bench is not, after all, the whole of the Opposition, and it is earnestly to be hoped that, either on a motion for the adjournment of the House, or on the motion for the adjournment over the recess, the whole question of the new legislation will be raised in the House of Commons. Otherwise, it is reasonable to assume that during the recess the new Acts will be received and considered by the Secretary of State, and that nothing will then be left but *ex post facto* criticism of an academic and futile character. The speeches of Lord G. Hamilton and Sir Richard Webster on Mr. Herbert Roberts's amendment to the Address seemed definitely to anticipate, and even to invite, a further discussion upon the new sedition laws before the Secretary of State decided to forego his right to disallow them. It is for independent members of the House of Commons to bring on such a discussion while there is yet time.

Writing on March 21 to Mr. John Barker, the Liberal candidate for Maidstone at the recent bye-election, Sir W. Harcourt said that there was certainly no sign that the Government had improved their position in public estimation. "Their frontier policy in India has been a disastrous error, entailing a wanton loss of life and sacrifice of money for no adequate result." True. But why has Sir William Harcourt nothing to say of the Government's calamitous policy "within the frontier" of India?

There is not much to be said about the telegraphic report of the debate upon the Indian Budget in the Legislative Council at Calcutta last Monday. "The Native members," we read, "all deplored the fact that Great Britain would not pay the cost of the frontier operations." They might well deplore the fact; and nobody is to blame for it but the Government of India and the India Office. As for Lord Elgin's speech, we seem to have disposed of it in advance. But it is odd that, in the matter of the "breach of faith" controversy about Chitral, he should "acknowledge the warm and generous advocacy of the Secretary of State." For what Lord George Hamilton did was warmly and generously to hide himself behind Lord Elgin, and to try to cast upon a subordinate Government a responsibility which rightly belongs to himself and his colleagues in the Cabinet. Lord Elgin takes a cheerful view of—or puts a good face upon—the results of the humiliating war beyond the frontier. "There is," he says, "scarcely a corner left where it has not been shown that the forces of the Queen-Empress can and will come if bidden"; which, we suppose, is to secure us the affection of tribesmen who prize their independence before their lives. The "forward" policy foreshadowed for the future is, it seems, "founded on reason and justice."

> While abstaining from arrogant assertion of authority, it does not shut out from hopes of improvement and progress men whose chief fault is that they have never come under the civilising influences which established peace and order bring with them.

This is almost lyrical. It is the "missionary enterprise" aspect of the "forward" policy. Well, we have seen those mountain batt—— we mean, those civilising influences at work; and "the Native members all deplored the fact that Great Britain would not pay the cost." Plainly, one must reconsider one's conceptions of "reason and justice."

In reply to Mr. Arthur O'Connor, Lord George Hamilton stated in the House of Commons, on March 21, with reference to the organisation of a force for the Tochi Valley, that he was unable, "so long as the pending negotiations and arrangements with the tribes are incomplete, to give any information as to the disposition of forces which may be thought necessary henceforward." Clearly, therefore, Lord G. Hamilton declined to give to the House of Commons information which had already been published in the Anglo-Indian journals. For in the *Pioneer* of February 25 last we find the following:—

> It is notified that the force to be maintained in the Tochi Valley under the command of Colonel Egerton will consist of four guns of No. 6 Bombay Mountain Battery, two squadrons of the 1st Punjab Cavalry, the 8th Bengal Infantry, the 33rd Punjab Infantry, the 37th Dogras, the 20th Madras Infantry, and four Maxim guns. Colonel Egerton will have as staff: Lieutenant Cheyne, of the 8th Bengal Cavalry, as Orderly Officer; Captain Fane, 1st P.C., D.A.A. and Q.M.G.; Surgeon-Colonel Bookey, Principal Medical Officer; Captain R. E. Sullivan, Commissariat Officer; Lieutenant Vaughan, Border Regiment, Transport Officer; Captain Waghorn, Field Engineer; Lieutenant Bell, Rifle Brigade, Signalling Officer.

"The force to be maintained in the Tochi Valley"—whither Sir Henry Fowler, in the innocence of his heart, allowed a forward movement to be made "as a matter of police." There is now, it would seem, to be permanent occupation of Waziristan. And yet one hears easy-going politicians saying that the "forward" policy has been killed! Parliament, meantime, looks indolently on because, as Lord G. Hamilton puts it, the cost of such measures "will be defrayed in the future, as in the past, from the revenues of India." The thing is nothing less than a national scandal.

At the same time, of course, the policy of the occupation of Chitral is being continued and developed. One has not heard yet of the construction of further forts on the Peshawar-Chitral road, though the announcement may be made any day. But the *Pioneer* (February 18) gives an interesting account of the arrangements for the annual relief of the Chitral garrison:—

> The annual relief of the Chitral garrison will probably be completed by the third week in May. The usual arrangements will be made for laying in supplies, through tribal agency, along the road through Dir, and special precautions will be taken to guard against attack by the tribes west of the Panjkora. The Malakand flying column will remain at full strength until the relief has been carried out. The Buffs will then return to India, and the Malakand-Swat garrison will be reduced to normal strength. As the Boner bogey has been laid there will no doubt be less anxiety felt in future regarding the safety of the Chitral road, but the Government of India will never be quite at their ease on this score after the revelation of the fighting power of the Mamunds.

"Special precautions will be taken to guard against attack by the tribes west of the Panjkora. The Malakand flying column will remain at full strength until the relief has been carried out." Yet, according to the pleasant picture which Lord George Hamilton presented to a credulous House of Commons, these tribes welcome our encroachment upon their independence and are only grieved that they may not be formally incorporated in British territory.

How long, one wonders, will the fables of the "forward" school be permitted to deceive the public?

"Lord Roberts, in his great speech on Indian frontier wars," writes Professor Beesly in the April number of the *Positivist Review*, "dismissed the most important question of all in one sentence. It was no business of his, he said, to enquire how India could meet the expense. And to think that this is the man who has captured the Indian Government and directed its policy for several years!"

The *Pioneer*, it seems, has been reading the recent Blue-books, and it has come to conclusions which the Government will not greatly like. For all that, it deserves credit for recognising so frankly the higher allegiance to truth and reason. The decision to establish a post at Wano in Waziristan in 1894, it will be remembered, was taken only by a majority of one in the Viceroy's Council, and in the face of the emphatic warnings of Sir Dennis Fitzpatrick, then Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab. And what came of it? This, says the *Pioneer*:

The result, of course, was a disturbance and an expedition; but, equally of course, so far from being convinced that a blunder had been made, the Foreign Office actually found arguments from our experience at Wano to urge an advance in the Tochi Valley as well. The despatch in which this proposal is put forward is dated Simla, June 4, 1895, and is an excellent example of the special pleading which is so often made to do duty for argument in this connexion.

After analysing the despatch, the *Pioneer* concludes with this sensible and emphatic sentence:

Such is the story of the occupation of the Tochi Valley as told in the Blue-book, and we doubt if even the Chitral papers gave a more lamentable exhibition of Government dragged at the heels of a Foreign Secretary and one or two ambitious frontier officials.

The following passage is not taken from a back number of INDIA, but from a recent article in the *Pioneer*, which may be commended to the notice of Lord George Hamilton. He will no doubt gratefully kiss the chastising hand of a friend.

With restless frontier officials forgetting all else, even the interests of the Empire, in their eagerness to civilise the tribesmen of the border against their will; with a Government forbidding one year, in its professed anxiety to respect the independence of the tribes, what it is anxious to sanction a year or two later (as in the case of the proposed levy of a tribute); and in full view of such irritating measures as the enhancement of the duty on Kohat salt, why should we doubt that suspicion and distrust of our intentions prepared the ground on which fanaticism last year sowed and reaped its bloody harvest? Careful observers predicted it, experience has proved it, the plaints and petitions of the tribesmen proclaim it. The Secretary of State for India has told us that in the future interference on the frontier is to be strictly limited to the fulfilment of obligations and the requirements of indisputable strategical necessity; but all this has been said before, and the saying of it again will avail little unless we come out of positions where increasing intervention must in the nature of things be forced upon us, and unless the Government of India bid their frontier officers understand that they are there as wardens of the marches to keep the peace at as small a cost in rupees and broken heads as possible, and not to put in practice their own theories, however exalted, at the public expense.

No less sound has the *Pioneer* become on the financial question. It does not fear that the estimate of the cost of frontier operations will prove as untrustworthy as did the Afghan estimates of 1880. The changes in the system of military accounts form the basis of its hopefulness. "But we do say," our contemporary remarks, "that

if the language now used by Lord George Hamilton leads anybody to suppose that India can afford what the present frontier operations will cost, in the sense we should speak of a private individual being able to afford to live up to a stated income, then the Secretary of State is merely helping to propagate and confirm a pure delusion.

"A pure delusion"—the expression is most just. The *Pioneer*—official organ though it be—further points out, as INDIA has been doing, that "for years back we have starved the provinces to meet Imperial necessities, and that the reserves which a prudent finance always keeps in the form of potential taxation have been almost exhausted."

In a word, if it be said that India can afford to pay the cost of the frontier operations, this must be taken to mean only that with good luck the Government will be able to go on without failing to meet its obligations through having deferred many important works and reforms, some of which are absolutely indispensable and others extremely desirable.

The *Pioneer* has turned over a new leaf with a vengeance. *O si sic omnia!*

The *Standard*—the official organ of the Conservative party—says: "There is reason to believe that Lord Elgin desires to return from India before the beginning of the next hot season, and that the appointment of his successor is now engaging the attention of the Government."

It was announced last Saturday that Sir Alexander Mackenzie had been peremptorily ordered home by his medical advisers, that he vacated the office of Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and that he would leave Bombay on April 9. It has since been announced that Sir John Woodburn, who was appointed a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council two years ago, would succeed Sir A. Mackenzie in the vacant office. We cannot profess to regard this appointment with anything but profound regret. Sir John Woodburn has, we believe, been an almost consistently baneful influence in Indian politics for some time past, and the share he took in dealing with the troubles of last summer certainly did not increase any confidence and respect which he enjoyed. One can only hope that, in the new and highly responsible office of Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, he will turn his back once for all upon some of the qualities which have hitherto seemed to characterise him. But it is, we must confess, a slender hope, especially in these days of reaction and repression.

"If the Government wishes to free the rayat from his hopeless bondage to the money-lender," says the *Friend of India*, "it must make trial of the ancient system of taking rent and revenue in kind." Our contemporary points to the example of Egypt and Cyprus for a reversion to the time-honoured method. In Cyprus, as in India, it was found that when the cereal tithes were collected in cash a large percentage was always in arrears, and a certain proportion had to be written off as bad debt. The Cyprus Government, instead of going on worrying with the system introduced on the English occupation, threw it over and returned to the old plan. Now they get all their payments with satisfactory regularity. The example is surely worthy of the notice of our Indian administrators when not only is the rayat harassed and the Government worried, but "the price of produce in the bazaars of India is three or four times the price that the rayat gets for his harvest." Says the *Friend of India*:

What we urge the Government to do, namely, to take from the zemindars revenue in kind and make the zemindars in their turn take rent from the rayats in grain—for that is the way the change would work—is already being done by the *mahajuns*. The difference is, and it is all the difference between good administration and bad, that the profit goes into the pockets of the *mahajun* instead of the cultivator, and herein lies the unsound spot in our system of revenue collection.

All of which goes to support a return to the simple plan so persistently advocated by experts like Sir William Wedderburn.

In this connexion it may be interesting to quote a passage from the leading article printed in the *Bullionist* of March 25, upon Sir W. Wedderburn's recent lecture on agricultural banks. The *Bullionist*, which may be taken as representing a good deal of "City" opinion, could not attach much importance to Lord G. Hamilton's *paulo-post-future* hopes:—

When we consider the culpable opposition persistently shown on the subject by the India Office since it was first pressed on the attention of the Secretary of State sixteen years ago, the vague promise recently made by the present political head of the department can hardly be considered reassuring. Sir William Wedderburn strongly advocated some project such as we have mentioned as far back as 1883 before the East India Association. Poona was selected for the experiment, and the scheme was approved by the Viceroy, his colleagues, and every other authority in India. But, instead of there being any practical outcome, the matter ended in the suggestion by the India Office of purely hypothetical and absurd difficulties. The Indian department in London could not possibly have any business acquaintance with the subject; yet they refused to allow the proposed experiment to be made, on the astounding and utterly unsupported ground that it was not applicable to the state of the country.

"Under circumstances so unpropitious," the writer added, "there is but little hope that the Indian department will deviate from the arbitrary and obstructive officialism which for fifteen years has left the peasants" in the grip of the money-lenders.

The *Englishman* admits that "it would be affectation to think otherwise than with exceeding seriousness" of the plague disturbance in Bombay. It blames the Committee for "endeavouring to carry on its operations amongst a

naturally recalcitrant section without taking the precautions against violent resistance which General Gatacre so successfully adopted last year." This is, however, but one side of the matter, and not the really important side either. The real question is as to the nature and methods of the operations. One would like to know what are the precise facts indicated by the *Englishman* when it says "there are grounds for believing that the outbreak was not only carefully premeditated by men who have influence over the weaving class, but that extraneous influences were also at work which had little to do with resentment at plague measures, though they found in these measures an appropriate occasion for taking advantage of popular discontent." These premeditations and influences, if any, cannot too soon be exhibited in the light of day. The reports, such as they are, do not contribute much enlightenment. If "it was well known that trouble was brewing," and that "more than one person of influence among the community would be stirring up the Julais to active resistance to the authorities"—if all this "was well known" on the morning of the outbreak, there would seem to be not a little substance in the *Pioneer's* complaints of official "unpreparedness." Have the inculpated parties been arrested—or deported?

The *Englishman*, however, acknowledges that the measures of the Plague Committee "have caused very great and deep-rooted discontent, and were sullenly obeyed only when they could not be passively evaded." The real point is, why was this discontent not obviated, so as to prevent the alleged "premeditations" and "influences" from using it as a handle for their wicked purposes? The Government view naturally is that the assault on the search party was "wholly unprovoked." The Julai community is said to be exceptionally ignorant and tradition-bound, though this is not the usual character one ascribes to weavers. What we should like to know is whether the officials have in fact taken every possible means of avoiding and preventing offence to religious and social feelings. We trust that the fullest available information will be extracted from Lord George Hamilton by persistent questioning, especially as to the employment of soldiers. The remedy ought, of course, to be pushed as far as possible. But it is obviously necessary to find out the true cause or causes of the visitation. Has investigation been made, for example, as to the effect of the huge factory buildings and living barracks on the soil of the district?

Within the past week Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt has addressed two more meetings in Lancashire, one at Waterloo and the other at Moston. At both meetings Mr. Dutt dwelt on the folly of the recent war beyond the frontier, and on the cruel results of frequent revenue settlements and harsh assessment of land in India, which were, he said, the real causes of the poverty of the peasantry, and of frequent famines. He referred at greater length to the new law of sedition, and with reference to the recent riots in Bombay argued that to stifle the expression of discontent in India was a foolish and dangerous policy; it was teaching the people to give expression to their discontent by violent methods. Commenting at Waterloo on the provisions of the new law, Mr. Dutt pointed out that they empowered the Government of India to prosecute a native Indian for anything spoken or written in England or in any other part of the world. He therefore looked forward to the pleasure of a prosecution when he returned to India, a year or two years hence, for what he had just said about the frontier war and other matters. This remark caused much amusement, and the Chairman, in concluding, said that he expected to see Mr. Dutt, not in an Indian prison, but in the British Parliament two years hence.

At Moston, Mr. Dutt referred to the question asked in the House of Commons on the previous night by Sir William Wedderburn with reference to the new Sedition Law, and dwelt on the gross injustice and folly of classing editors of newspapers in a civilised country with thieves and vagrants and the worst classes of offenders. He cited the language used by some of the speakers on the occasion of passing the new law as indicating the spirit of anger and vindictiveness in which it was conceived and passed. The great Empire of India, he said, was built up in the past, not by statesmen who ruled in anger and under panic, but by statesmen who reposed confidence in the people—not by rulers of the "carrion-kite" character, but by rulers who united the strength of the eagle with the gentleness of the dove. Mr. Dutt's speeches were greatly appreciated at both places, and his remarks upon the outrageous character of the new gagging Act were repeatedly cheered.

Mr. A. M. Bose's vigorous platform campaign for justice to India continues. During the past week he has addressed three meetings in Lancashire, and he has, we understand, many prospective engagements to fulfil. Our Indian readers will be interested to know that Mr. Bose delivered speeches on Indian questions on each of the three days of the recent Conference of the National Liberal Federation at Leicester. On March 21 he was among the delegates requisitioned to speak at the "district meetings" held in connexion with the Conference, and, along with Mr. Maddison, M.P., addressed a meeting at Market Harborough. On March 22, as we announced last week, Mr. Bose seconded the resolution upon foreign and Indian policy at the Conference of the Federation; and on March 23 he delivered a further speech upon the Indian crisis at a meeting of the Women's Liberal Federation at Leicester. Mr. Bose is fully alive to the importance of securing the adoption of a resolution at the meetings which he addresses, and we hope to print next week some of the important declarations which have in this way been approved. The reception which has been accorded to Mr. Bose and to Mr. Dutt in various parts of the country will, one may hope, encourage more of their countrymen to follow their excellent example of appealing directly to the judgment of British audiences.

Sir William Wedderburn brought to the notice of Lord George Hamilton in the House of Commons a week ago an important petition from the Calcutta Bar against the new law of sedition. Lord George Hamilton described the argument of the petition in terms which the Calcutta Bar will no doubt appreciate. And he also went out of his way to speak of the petition as "a letter purporting to be written on behalf of the Calcutta Bar." If this phrase meant anything, one would have expected it to mean that Lord G. Hamilton was not satisfied as to the genuineness of the document. But, as will be seen from the supplementary question reported elsewhere, when Sir W. Wedderburn asked Lord G. Hamilton whether that was his meaning, he promptly replied that it was not. Then what in the world was the object of the circumlocution? Was it merely intended to be offensive? The representations of public bodies in India against the repressive legislation of the Government have been met, if not with studied contempt, at least with scant courtesy. Lord George Hamilton appears to be introducing similar methods in the House of Commons. If he persists, he may yet learn a salutary lesson.

Sir George King's distinguished services as Superintendent of the Royal Botanic Garden, Calcutta, Director of the Botanical Survey of India, and Government Quinologist, have been suitably commemorated on his retirement by Sir Alexander Mackenzie. The late Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal has placed it on record in the *Calcutta Gazette* that "Sir George King's labours in the fields of morphological and systematic botany have greatly extended our knowledge of the flora of India and the Malay Archipelago," and he points to "the striking improvements that have been effected during the past twenty-five years in the Botanic Garden at Sibpur" as a testimony to Sir George King's success as an administrator. It is specially gratifying to note that Sir Alexander Mackenzie touched on a conspicuous service of Sir George King's which has directly reached the humblest Indians:

> By developing the Sikkim cinchona plantations and introducing the manufacture of quinine by a cheap process, he rendered it possible to introduce and extend throughout the province and in other parts of India the system of selling quinine by the dose, and thus placed within the reach of the poorest peasant a remedy for the malarial fever that prevails in so many districts.

It is not often that an Indian official, even in a quarter of a century's service, is able to prove so considerable a benefactor. Sir George King, we may mention, is a native of Aberdeen, and a medical graduate of Aberdeen University.

WILL PARLIAMENT ABDICATE?

We hope, rather than believe, that the House of Commons perceives the insult which is being put upon it by the India Office. Two repressive enactments of the most drastic type have lately been hurried through the Legislative Council at Calcutta—namely, the Penal Code Amendment Act which was passed on February 18, and the Criminal Procedure Act which was passed on March 12. In order to understand the origin of these measures, it is necessary to refer back to the events of last summer. On July 1, the Tory member for Hull asked Lord George Hamilton in the House of Commons "whether, in consequence of the murderous outrage at Poona made on Mr. Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst, the Indian Government would consider the desirability of adopting effectual means to prevent the inculcation of sedition through the Press." The gross and unproved imputations contained in this question excited, as they deserved to excite, a strong protest. But the Speaker allowed the question to be put, and Lord G. Hamilton stated in reply that the police were enquiring into the causes and circumstances of the Poona outrage; that "the habitual dissemination of false intelligence and of appeals to religious animosities by a portion of the vernacular Press" had for some years received the attention of the Indian Government; and that if the result of the police enquiry was to show "that this outrage was prompted by articles of this character," the question of "taking measures to prevent the encouragement of crime through the Press" would undoubtedly be considered. That is to say, the Government of India hoped to find in the results of a private police enquiry a pretext for the repressive measures which it had long contemplated. On the following day Sir William Wedderburn asked Lord George Hamilton whether it was his intention to propose Press legislation for India as the result of an enquiry of this kind. Lord George Hamilton denied that his words would bear that interpretation. Whereupon Sir William Harcourt asked: "Do I understand from the noble lord that no alteration will be made in the Press law of India until the House of Commons has had an opportunity of pronouncing an opinion upon that subject?" Lord George Hamilton asserted in reply that the Government of India was responsible for the maintenance of law and order in India. But he added, somewhat superfluously perhaps, that "any action which it may so take is, of course, subject to review in this House." That was the position in which the matter was left at the close of last Session. A series of Press prosecutions—notably the case of Mr. Tilak—followed in India. But in no case, so far as we can discover, was any evidence offered to connect a defendant with the outrage at Poona. Indeed, in the case of Mr. Tilak the attempt was expressly repudiated by the prosecution. On the face of the matter, therefore, the anticipated excuse for repressive legislation completely failed to appear, and, indeed, so harshly was the existing law strained against the defendants, and so severe were the penalties imposed in the Press trials, that impartial observers, especially after the refusal of the Privy Council to intervene, looked for an amendment of the law, not in the direction of increased stringency, but in the direction of relaxation—or, to be accurate, in the direction of the intentions of the legislator as distinguished from the interpretation put by Mr. Justice Strachey upon his work.

In these circumstances the monstrously oppressive proposals which were made in the Legislative Council at the close of the year were received with simple amazement in this country. So soon, therefore, as Parliament met, Sir William Wedderburn asked Lord George Hamilton whether in view of the gravity of the matter he would secure that the proposals should not become law until the House of Commons had had an opportunity of discussing them. At that time—the middle of February—the Bills were still before the Legislative Council at Calcutta. But Lord George Hamilton refused to ask the Government of India to postpone the consideration of them, and, by implication, he declined to bring on a debate in Parliament. "If," he said, "they should pass into law, the power of allowing or disallowing them is vested in the Crown, and I am in no sense disposed to shirk responsibility for any advice which I may give to her Majesty on this subject." On the following day, February 18, in the debate on Mr. Herbert Roberts's amendment to the Address, which deprecated *inter alia* "the present proposals to increase the severity of the law relating to sedition in India," Lord George Hamilton made a further statement of the utmost importance. He denied, and reiterated his denial, that the new measures substantially changed the law:—

> The changes in the law which were now proposed merely (he said) put in plain and unambiguous language the interpretation which had recently been given by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council to Section 124A of the old code. He was informed by his legal advisers that the law was practically unaltered, and that in fact the law of sedition in India and in England was almost identical. The only other alterations were those proposed in the Criminal Procedure Bill, which was an amending and consolidating Bill . . . . He could assure the hon. gentleman that there was not the slightest intention or wish to silence or curb the Native Press.

What was certainly of not less importance was the series of assurances added at the close of the same debate by the chief law officer of the Crown, the Attorney-General:

> He must (said Sir Richard Webster) traverse entirely the view of the hon. member for Cardiff that the object and effect of the proposed alterations of the law were the muzzling of the Press . . . . The amendments were only intended to make clear that which had been the law ever since the Penal Code was passed. They might or might not be desirable, but they certainly had not the intention, nor would they have the effect, of curtailing or interfering with the liberty of the Press.

On the strength of these solemn assurances from the chief law officer of the Crown and the Secretary of State for India, the House of Commons rejected Mr. Herbert Roberts's amendment by a majority of 73 votes. The House of Commons was assured that its remonstrances were not called for. It was also assured that, at that particular moment, there were special objections to Parliamentary discussion of the Bills. "This law," Lord George Hamilton said, "is now under the consideration of the Legislative Council who have certain duties to perform, and I think it is inadvisable that we should, in these circumstances, discuss its details, because it is obvious that the effect by that discussion must influence, and perhaps prejudice, the men whose duty it is either to assent or to dissent." In the same vein of "correctitude" the Attorney-General added: "These proposed alterations are still under consideration, and it would be very wrong if the House, on the materials now before it, should attempt to influence the judgment of those who have the responsibility of deciding in the first instance what amendments in the law are desirable."

If these words meant anything they meant that an opportunity for discussion would arise later. But since that time two things—if, indeed, they ever were doubtful—have been made abundantly clear. In the first place, as we have shown by repeated quotation in our columns, the new measures, it is seen, have both the intention and the effect of changing the law and of curtailing the liberty of the Press in India. The effect is clearly foreseen and bitterly deplored by all sections of public opinion in India, while as to the intention the speeches in the Legislative Council—and especially such speeches as Sir Alexander Mackenzie's—are conclusive. In the second place, as our Parliamentary report has shown, Lord G. Hamilton has no intention of bringing the matter before Parliament for debate. "I intend," he said in reply to Sir William Wedderburn on March 24, "to lay the Acts on the Table of the House as soon as I have considered them, but I do not propose to take any other steps in connexion with them." We need not attempt to characterise this course in the light of the previous speeches of the Secretary of State and the Attorney-General. But the question is, What does the House of Commons mean to do? Can it be that it means to do nothing? Is it going to abdicate its functions and submit to humiliation at the hands of the India Office and the military despotism which calls itself the Government of India? In the debate on February 18 Lord George Hamilton undertook that when the "opinions" expressed in the Legislative Council came home "if it was desired that they should be published, he would at once do so, and that would form a legitimate and proper opportunity for discussing the matter." He has since been asked more than once to fulfil his pledge, but all that he is willing to do is to lay the Acts upon the Table. We say frankly that if the House of Commons will submit to this sort of treatment it will submit to, and deserves to suffer, anything. The tissue of contradictions and makeshifts to which the India Office has in this matter had recourse is

stupendous. Last July Lord George Hamilton clearly indicated a change in the law. Now he denies that any change is contemplated. If so, when did he and his friends, or instruments, change their minds? Last July he suggested that the action of the Government would depend upon the result of a police enquiry. What was the nature of that enquiry? What were its conclusions? Has the House of Commons no curiosity upon these points? Does it not perceive any discrepancy between the solemn assurances given to it and the speeches delivered in Calcutta? Is it prepared to abandon in April a discussion which was held out to it as "legitimate and proper" in February? For our part, we marvel most at the supineness of the Front Opposition Bench. We cannot doubt the opinions which statesmen like Sir William Harcourt and Mr. John Morley entertain of the Russian or even Turkish schemes of the Government of India. But why, in the name of humanity, do they sit still? Can it be—no other hypothesis suggests itself—that they are once more paralysed by "the etiquette of the Front Benches," and are awaiting the good pleasure of Sir Henry Fowler? In any case a terrible responsibility rests upon them. It is for them to say whether Parliament shall abdicate, and permit a calamitous engine of oppression to be employed in India in the name of the British people, solely at the wish of a handful of bureaucratic officers.

"COMMON SENSE AT LAST."

WAS it not Bob Lowe who said, "All knowledge is of some use—except heraldry"? If he had been endowed with that "intelligent anticipation of facts even before they occur," which Mr. Curzon attributes, pleasantly enough, to the modern journalist, he might have added, "and currency." The debate in the House of Commons on Mr. Vicary Gibbs's motion is reported on another page of our present issue. It may stand for what it is worth. What concerns us far more deeply than the superficialities of technical remedy for India's financial and economic ills is the basis of the whole problem. We do not often have the pleasure of seeing eye to eye with the *Daily Mail*, or with City magnates. But we cordially welcome an article which appeared in our contemporary's issue of Tuesday last over the signature of Mr. W. H. Grenfell, whose name is well known and esteemed in the City of London. That article hit the nail on the head and drove it home. It is, we fancy, a sign of the times—a promise of better things to come. In a word, it is no less than a personal triumph for Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, whose economic teaching it reproduced.

Mr. Grenfell most properly recalls a passage in the Indians' Grand Charter of 1858, which is too little remembered in practice, however much it may be to the front in oratorical pyrotechnics. It is this:

> In their prosperity shall be our strength, and in their gratitude our best reward. And may the God of all power grant to us, and to those in authority under us, strength to carry out these our wishes for the good of our people.

It is not the strength that has been lacking, but the sense of right method towards the end. "Those in authority under us" have laboured hard under perverted ideas, and the purpose of the Queen and of the British nation has been deplorably ill carried into effect. But at last the authorities in India are brought to their bearings by conspicuous ill-success, and events have accomplished what the arguments and entreaties of instructed India have laboured, without much reward in results hitherto, to attain. Events, Mr. Grenfell says, "have forced the problem of the government of India into a first place among the cares of our Empire, and have compelled us to enquire how far we have succeeded in claiming India's gratitude, and how far our strength is founded on her prosperity." Precisely. Have not some of us been trying for years to impress on the British public that this is beyond all comparison the supreme question before the Government of the country?

Where, then, does this failure lie? That is Mr. Grenfell's square question. His answer is: "It is to be found in the impoverishment of India under our rule." India has incurred a large—an enormous—debt. Why? Simply "to pay for her conquest by us." An extraordinary answer, and yet unimpeachably true. Let Mr. Grenfell state—as Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji has stated over and over again—the details:

> During the Mutiny and the two succeeding years there was a deficit of more than Rs. 300,000,000; large sums have been borrowed for railway and other works, the interest on which has to be paid in the equivalent of gold; and large sums are also remitted home by those in the military and civil services, pensioners, traders, and others, whose primary interests are, after all, bound up in the country from which they come, and not in the country by which they are paid. In addition to this, there is the most serious fact that India, whose standard is silver, has been tied to a country whose standard is gold, in consequence of which the burden of the gold debt which she has been made to borrow has been steadily increasing during the last twenty years, so that to the Indian people the loss in exchange alone is not less than £8,000,000 sterling a year, for the payment of which they get no benefit whatever in return.
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> The financial drain upon India, combined with the increased burden of her gold debt, which has rendered further borrowings necessary, has been so great, that if a fair valuation of her assets (including railways, irrigation works, and loans for productive works) and liabilities were made, it would be found that she was in a state of insolvency, while her debt was increasing and the limit of profitable taxation had been reached.

The Government is aware of the truth of all this. But the misfortune is that it deals with the difficulty in an abstract way, and shuffles off the awkward pressure of facts upon fresh loans, after the clandestine fashion which we exposed last week. To address itself to a fundamental remedy is, it would seem, the most distasteful task the Government could undertake. The new attitude would involve severe condemnation of the old. But let Mr. Grenfell proceed:

> But this is not all. There remains a crowning act of open injustice. The Indian people are poor—poor beyond belief. While in England the average annual income per head of the population has been placed as high as £42, the average annual income in India is but from 20s. to 30s., and when we consider that in this sum is included the salaries paid to the official classes, from the Viceroy downwards, we can, to some extent, gauge the poverty of a people whose annual income per head is put down at such a sum. This frugal and docile people having neither banking account nor stockings for their savings, have long been in the habit of storing their hard-earned rupees in the form of bracelets and ornaments against the day of trial, when they could be turned back again into the rupees from which they had been made. For 80,000,000 of them the day of trial came last year, when 40,000,000 were threatened with death by famine, and 40,000,000 with semi-starvation, and in this crisis of their existence they found that the mints had been closed to them by a British Government, and that, in many instances, they had been robbed of as much as half their savings.
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> The famine was always one rather of money than of food; early in its course the Viceroy had telegraphed that the former was wanted, and not the latter, of which there was sufficient in the country, as a whole, and it was money of which this poverty-stricken people had been robbed. How many deaths were caused by this great famine will probably never be known, but it is a significant fact that while it raged a pound of rice in India was cheaper than a pound of wheat in London. The hoards of the Indian people, in the form of bangles ornaments and bullion, have been estimated at 1,000,000,000 oz., and to halve by a stroke of the pen the money of these hard-earned savings of the poorest of the poor is not the way to earn their gratitude, as desired by the Queen-Empress. *Was ever such injustice perpetrated by a humane Government on a defenceless people? How does it differ from a direct confiscation of half the deposits in the savings and other banks in this country?*

Mr. Dadabhai and Sir William Wedderburn have been preaching the substance of all this to ears that have proved very hard of hearing. Will those ears listen with more attention, and with better comprehension of the facts, when the facts are thus spontaneously set forth in a Conservative journal by a man of Mr. Grenfell's political and financial associations? And not yet even is Mr. Grenfell's indictment complete:

> But this is not the only result of this monetary policy; to meet the difficulty of defraying the home charges, and to avoid the loss of income to the many servants of the crown, 200,000,000 of people, besides being deprived of a large portion of their savings, have been put upon an artificially contracted monetary standard, which differs from the standard of every other country in the world, hampers their trade, and insidiously increases the burden of their taxes. Well may an Indian native, loyal to the English connexion, say, "Without any intention or wish, and with every desire for the good of India, England has in reality been the most disastrous and destructive foreign invader of India; and under present lines, unceasingly and every day continues to be so."

"Is this act of spoliation," then, asks Mr. Grenfell, "to be perpetuated, or is it to be remedied?" The Indian Government's refusal of a contribution from England seems to him to show that "its heart is hardened." He sees clearly that "famine and the black death have brought the injustice suddenly home to the Indian people"; and he declares frankly that "it is no sentimental grievance, but one which must be faced, and faced quickly, by all who believe that security is to be found in doing justice and that our strength in India lies in the prosperity of our

fellow-subjects." Mr. Grenfell's declaration is a noble one, and the fact that it is made ought to afford some consolation to the people of India, who have only too much reason to complain that their expostulations and entreaties are habitually ignored.

We do not agree at all with the *Daily Mail's* comment that Mr. Grenfell's article "makes a very strong case for the re-opening of the Indian mints." It is quite true that, as the *Mail* says, "it is difficult to exaggerate the consequences of closing them." But the opening of them is a very different matter. The real situation is depicted effectively enough by the writer of "City Chatter" in the *Sunday Special* of March 20:

The truth is, as I view it, that *no currency scheme, however ingenious, will, or can, change the elementary facts of India's monetary position.* India is a debtor country compelled to remit annually the sum of about £17,000,000 sterling to London for Government purposes, in addition to something like seven or eight millions more, due by companies, firms, and private individuals. What has been called "India's Tribute to England" then amounts to some £25,000,000 a year, which has to be liquidated by the export of merchandise. Now, let me ask, what in the name of financial common-sense has the closing of the mints done to assist this liquidation? What would a gold standard, or Mr. Lindsay's plan, or an increased duty on silver, do towards it? These are the questions; and the answer, I take it, is—nothing! *There is, it appears to me, only one thing that will help the situation, the extension of India's productive capacity.* But this is just what "tight" money—the consequence of the closing of the mints—is gradually killing.

Now, the first thing that will extend India's productive capacity is the reduction of the drain on the means of the people for the payment of the cost of madcap schemes of frontier adventure. Given the policy of retrenchment, the internal development may very well proceed, and the longer the military mandarins are peaceable the more will the country rejoice in growing prosperity. But the abandonment of the "forward" policy, important though it would be, would be very far from supplying a complete remedy for India's ills. What India wants, in order that her productive capacity may extend, is simply a fair chance. And that fair chance will not be offered to her until the fundamental economic evils to which Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji—and Mr. W. H. Grenfell—have directed attention are removed.

It will be seen from the remarks of Mr. Maclean and Mr. Balfour in the course of last Monday's conversation that the Government undertook to "keep a House" for the debate on Mr. Vicary Gibbs's motion. It will be seen, also, from the report of the debate, that the Government promptly granted a Committee of Enquiry. We do not complain of this gracious and submissive demeanour. But it is undoubtedly in strange contrast with the attitude which the Government has too frequently taken up when debates are suggested, or enquiry is demanded, upon matters far more closely affecting the welfare of British India than any scheme of currency-mongering. The conclusion is irresistible that the Government found it convenient to assent to a demand strongly urged by the commercial and moneyed classes at home, while it can afford, or thinks that it can afford to ignore the prayer of the voteless millions of India. Let us not be misunderstood. We are not complaining of the Government's tenderness to the "City." What we complain of is its indifference where much graver—though, for the moment, less materially powerful—interests are concerned. Of all unenviable reputations, surely the most unenviable is that of the man who, while he gives way to the strong, coerces the weak. The incident illustrates once more, as every debate on an Indian question in Parliament illustrates, the paramount need of securing in the House of Commons a strong and representative body of Indian members. Meantime, Mr. Grenfell's outspoken article furnishes signal evidence that Indian problems are at last touching the mind and conscience of the British public. The people of India have reason to take encouragement from the clear indications that, in spite of apparent reverses, in spite of all but hopeless efforts, yet the question of their condition—the most fundamental question for Englishmen as well as for them—is at length and at last penetrating the minds of impartial men in all sections of the political world.

The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointment of Sir John Woodburn, K.C.S.I., of the Indian Civil Service, to be Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in succession to Sir Alexander Mackenzie, K.C.S.I., who is compelled to resign for reasons of health.

SIR HENRY MAINE AND INDIA.

It has probably been fortunate for the reputation of the late Sir Henry Maine in England that it did not rest exclusively upon the work that he did in India. England is apt to be more than a little ungrateful for the services rendered to her or to her subjects at a distance from her own shores. Sir Henry Maine's name is still a household word among educated Englishmen; but it is as the author of "Ancient Law," and the foremost investigator of the growth of law and custom, that they remember him. He has another claim upon their gratitude; and it is pleasant to hear of the distinguished company that met at the Society of Arts the other day to do honour to him for his work as a statesman and a jurist in India. The testimony given to the value of that work was remarkable for its emphasis, its many-sidedness, and the distinction of the men who gave it. Mr. Frederic Harrison, Sir Frederick Pollock, Sir A. C. Lyall, and Sir Courtenay Ilbert, to mention only a few of the speakers, are not men who use superlatives lavishly; but they did not stint them upon this occasion. It is already more than ten years since Maine died—a long time in days when old reputations fade so quickly to make room for new ones. It was well that this gathering of men who could speak with authority of his brilliant services should be held before it was too late.

The speeches at the Society of Arts were preceded by a masterly paper read by Mr. C. L. Tupper, in which he traced "the living and inspiring influence of Maine's ideas in certain fields of policy and administration open to the inspection rather of a few officials than of the great public concourse of learned men." Sir Henry Maine was in India from 1862 to 1869 as Law Member of the Council of the Governor-General. It thus fell to him to be, in the department of law, "the presiding genius of the transition from India of the Company to India of the Queen." He had to superintend the passing of many laws; but, as Mr. Tupper admirably said, his "great legacy does not consist in positive enactments, but in luminous ideas and comprehensive principles to be gathered less from the statute-book than from his speeches and writings." His head must have been full of those "luminous ideas" even before he went to India; for before he had set foot upon her soil he had already, in his "Ancient Law," written some pages on Indian village-communities more illuminating than anything that had at that time appeared in English. But the "luminous ideas" were well under the control of sound practical sense; for, as Sir Frederick Pollock said with not less truth than humour, "If a clever and unwise man, armed with Maine's book on 'Ancient Law,' had been turned loose in the Legislative Department in Calcutta, he might have done a good deal of mischief in less than seven years." A natural horror of this possibility of "mischief" causes the average practical man to look with unfriendly suspicion upon "luminous ideas." Maine's wonderful combination of practical wisdom with speculative ability must have gone far to remove this hostility to ideas, which is a deadly obstacle in the way of progress. "Maine," testifies Sir Alfred Lyall, "found exactly the formula which explained everything. If you put before him a set of facts, or a certain number of ideas and suggestions, which most Anglo-Indians had stumbled upon in a confused, unfinished way, he would suddenly set them all in order by one of his lucid and wide generalisations." Mr. Tupper gave some interesting illustrations of the way in which Maine's principles had helped his successors in the task of legislation and of administration. He had taught them to apply the principle of evolution to jurisprudence, to understand the gradual nature of the progress from status to contract, from the simple to the complex, the gradual disentanglement of the blended strands of authority, the continuous specialisation of functions. Again, he had taught them to compare one archaic society intelligently with another. The usefulness of such comparisons was vividly brought home to Mr. Tupper's audience a little later, when Sir F. Pollock felicitously described India as a country which was living in several centuries at once. "If the presidency towns were living in the late 19th century, a good deal of the North-West might be said to be still enveloped in the Mogul period of the 16th century; the Rajput States were in the period of the late Middle Ages, and Peshawar, so far as he had been able to ascertain in a very short visit, was about in the state of

the early Anglo-Norman period." Mr. Tupper spoke from his own experience of the way in which such comparisons had helped him in drafting the Punjab Frontier Crimes Regulation of 1887. "We did not, of course, pedantically try to imitate Anglo-Saxon, or, as it is, I believe, more correct to say, Anglo-Norman institutions. We based our project on the facts we found. But that Maine had taught us to compare one archaic society with another, and to accept as part of the course of nature some of the differences between tribal and civilised society, helped us both in understanding our case and in reporting it." So, too, Maine's doctrines of the evolution of property, and of the law of the family and of succession, had been of inestimable value when the principles of Punjab tribal law had to be formulated. His writings had cleared away from English minds the confusion between English and Indian ideas of landed property.

Finally, Mr. Tupper dwelt upon the two greatest services which Maine had rendered to India. One, known as yet only to a few specialists, was the foundation of the legal system which defines the relation to the Crown of protected Native States. Maine helped to form this system which Mr. Tupper regards as "one of the greatest though least known of the achievements of the British Government in India," chiefly by "the judicious application of rules drawn from international law in a sphere where that law as such and as a whole is excluded by the suzerainty of the Queen." The other service was the "application of a really scientific method in judicial and sociological enquiries." This, which was Maine's direct contribution to science, was of great if indirect service to India, because it helped to bridge the gulf between East and West. "Mutual tolerance is easier when educated Indians and Europeans perceive that India of to-day teems with analogies to the past of Europe." That last sentence is finely put, and furnishes an apt application of Mr. Lecky's memorable saying that "more than half the uncharitable judgments in the world arise from a deficiency of imagination." It may be used both to remind practical men of the moral utility of scientific study, and, in particular, to enforce Mr. Baden-Powell's plea for a better record of the actual forms and constitutions of North Indian joint-villages. The meeting at the Society of Arts will have borne excellent fruit if it leads Englishmen to think of Sir Henry Maine, not merely as jurist or statesman or scientific investigator, but as the interpreter of the East to the West, and to imitate him in acquiring that insight into Indian life which operates so effectually to change contempt or indifference into respect and sympathy.

THE BOGEY OF "OVER-POPULATION."

THAT India under British rule is growing poorer while the world is growing richer, and that the lot of the Indian peasant is becoming harder while elsewhere the toilers are entering into a new and easier life, is now scarcely denied even by the most optimist of official apologists. But they are at no loss for an explanation. England has given India the blessings of peace. The old check on population by war has ceased to operate. The population has therefore enormously increased. Inferior lands have had to be resorted to; and the standard of comfort has thus fallen. And then they talk in a grand way of the twenty million new mouths added to the population every ten years, and of the difficulty which the paternal and kindly Government of India has in providing for their subsistence.

Now let us look at this apology a little more closely, and consider, not the absolute addition to population, which tells us nothing, but the relative increase, the rate per cent. at which the population grows. Excluding Upper Burma (annexed in the middle of the period under review) we find that the population of British India had in 1891 a density of 247 per square mile, and had increased at the rate of ·97 per cent. per annum in the preceding ten years. If one excluded Lower Burma also, the numbers would be 269 and ·94 respectively. Now this is, no doubt, a dense population. But the rate of increase, far from being anything exceptional, is surpassed in many countries where the density is even greater. Thus in Belgium in 1896 the density was as great as 571, and the annual increase ·99 per cent. In England in 1891 there was a population of 539 to the square mile, and the average yearly increase for the preceding decade was 1·17 per cent.—considerably more than that of India in spite of the greater density. In Germany in 1890, the density was 247, just that of India, if one includes Lower Burma, but the average annual increase of the preceding ten years was, not ·97, but 1·35 per cent., while in particular parts of Germany it was even greater. Lest, however, it be argued that, though the density and the rate of increase in India are less than in many nations of Europe, the conditions of life are too dissimilar for the comparison to be of much value, one may go to Asia and take the case of Japan—the only large independent State for which one has the required statistics. In Japan in 1891 one finds a density of 273 to the square mile, and an average annual increase for the four preceding years of ·94. That is a position of affairs very close to that of India, if Lower Burma be excluded. Now Japan, from its more northerly situation, is a country the inhabitants of which require much more food to sustain life. It is able to export food. It supports, not indeed with ease, but with less difficulty than India, a much greater taxation per head. And its poverty, however severe according to European standards, is far less than that of India. It may, indeed, be urged that the adaptability and varied occupations of the Japanese mark them off from the Indians, whose old manufactures have been ruined by British competition, and whose institutions have become rigid in the resistance to alien government and ideas. It is a dangerous argument for an apologist. But one may accept it, and turning to India, as to a world in itself, one may see if an increase of population that would cause no alarm in East or West, is there sufficient to plunge the people into ever increasing poverty.

And first, without going beyond the geographical borders of India, let us compare the part under British rule with some of the most populous Native States. In the Native States under the authority of Madras (the single State of Travancore furnishing more than two-thirds of the population) one finds a density of 385 and a yearly increase of 1·06 per cent., and in Baroda, a density of 294 with an increase of 1·05, a density and an increase in each case in excess of the average for British territory. And in Mysore, while it is true that the density is less—177 to the square mile—the increase is much greater, in fact as much as 1·81, or nearly double that of British India. If, then, the rapid increase of the population of British India is the true cause of its poverty, what must be the state of Baroda, Mysore, and Travancore? Yet, strange as it may seem, these States are spoken of as comparatively prosperous. It seems that it is only on British territory that an increase of population is fatal to prosperity.

If, again, one considers, not British India as a whole, but each Province separately, one still finds that there is nothing abnormal about the growth of population—nothing that cannot be matched and more than matched from the neighbouring States under Indian rule. Now if we leave on one side Lower Burma and one small district, the two Provinces in which the population is increasing most rapidly are Madras, with a density of 252 per square mile and an annual increase of 1·55 per cent., and Bombay, where the corresponding figures are 151 and 1·45. Between these two, both in position and in density of population, stands Mysore, for which, as we have seen, the numbers are 177 and 1·8. That is to say, Mysore has a population with a density between the two, but increasing faster than either. The Punjab, once called the Garden of India, with a density of 188, has an increase of 1·07. In the valley of the Ganges, populous from time immemorial, while the density is very great, the increase is very small. In Bengal, with a density of 471, the annual increase is ·68, while higher up the river in the North-West Provinces, with a density of 436, the increase is only ·62. This is no doubt a very heavy population, and in some particular districts it is much heavier than the average. But it is placed in one of the most fertile valleys in the world, yielding three harvests in the year, in a climate where the wants of nature are reduced to a minimum; and it is a people famous for industry and frugality. If to this one adds, especially in the North-West Provinces, a considerable outlay for irrigation and public works, one cannot be far wrong in considering that there must be something very unsound in a society which is unable to absorb so moderate an increase. Bengal and the North-West Provinces contain more than half the population of

British India; and one is told that the disposal of this small increase, ·68 and ·62 per cent., is the great difficulty of the Government and the chief cause of the growing poverty of these ancient seats of civilisation. If one looks still more closely into the matter and considers, not the Province of Bengal as a whole, but Bengal proper, one finds that in many districts the population is stationary or even decaying. Here, then, is a region unaffected by the great curse that is ruining British India. Yet this is what Mr. F. H. Barrow, a civilian of over twenty years' standing, says in the *Calcutta Review* of October, 1893. "The villages in such parts look slovenly, decaying and dilapidated . . . . embankments, water-courses and tanks are all in disrepair." Mr. Barrow has his own way of accounting for this condition of things. It is sufficient for our purpose that it shows there are evils in India, growing evils, with which over-population can have nothing to do.

Thus one sees that the population of India, a most fertile country inhabited by a most frugal people, increases at a slower rate than that of many countries in Europe, at about the same rate as Japan, and at a slower rate than that of many Native States within its own borders; that India suffers under a poverty which is continually increasing; that the signs of this poverty are to be found in districts where the population is even diminishing; that of the other States with which one has compared it, though representing a great range of civilization and prosperity, some rich and some poor, none shows so hopeless a degree of poverty; and that, nevertheless, one is asked to consider the increase of its population as the main source of its misery—the one obstacle which thwarts the good intentions of a beneficent and enlightened Government.

Finally, when one hears of "over-population" as a cause of Indian poverty, is it meant that the people are too numerous for the land to supply them with food? Food is exported from India every year, so that cannot be the meaning. Is it meant that they cannot purchase foreign goods, having in consequence of the pressure of numbers to expend all their energies in raising food? The export of raw cotton, opium and jute is sufficient to pay for the cotton goods, which are the only foreign manufactures the mass of the Indians use. The Indians need no foreign luxuries, they export food, and yet one is told there is "over-population." But there is one thing one has forgotten. There is one foreign luxury, the most expensive of all luxuries, and in that the people of India are forced to indulge—the luxury of alien government and alien exploitation.

THE WEEK IN PARLIAMENT.

BY OUR OWN ONLOOKER.

On Thursday last there was an incident, or rather a series of incidents, which, while apparently of interest only to members of Parliament, has a very real interest for the public. I mean the sub-editing and the suppression of questions to Ministers by the clerks at the Table. It may be that those who have read about the outbreak of indignation on Thursday because of the suppression of a question put down by Mr. O'Kelly may think that this was an exceptional matter. It was nothing of the sort. The clerks have for years done this sort of thing, as any member will tell you. The case in point was perhaps a little more grotesque than some, but it was all part of a system, and a bad system too.

This is what happened. Mr. O'Kelly handed in a question asking if our Government had protested against the occupation of Kiao-Chow by the Germans. That question did not appear on the paper, and Mr. O'Kelly wanted to know why. The Speaker seemed very uneasy in his explanation, as well he might, for the thing was utterly indefensible. It seems that Mr. Curzon had said that he could not answer questions on that point, so the clerks had taken it on themselves to say that it was useless to print the enquiry! The Speaker said that the responsibility was his, and so it is theoretically. He explained that the clerks were allowed to "exercise their judgment" as to questions, and should consult him in all cases of doubt. But doubt does not often appear to assail these self-confident gentlemen, and in this case they did not consult the Speaker at all.

It therefore comes to this—a member hands in a question. A clerk, who is merely a paid official and in no way responsible to the public, makes up what he is pleased to call his mind that Mr. Curzon or any other Minister would not care to answer such an enquiry, and so away goes the question. Of course, this reduces the whole business of questions in the House to a happy-go-lucky accident, or a farce. Members have to take their chance in an obstacle race, and I believe I am well within the mark when I say that one out of five Indian questions has "gone under" for a long time. The Speaker felt apparently that he could not throw over the clerks, but he said repeatedly that this duty of selecting questions must be done with great discretion, and those who heard him detected in his tone an implied rebuke.

But to clinch the matter, the famous question appeared on the Paper in the pomp of print on Friday. That was a direct snub to the clerks, and was recognised as such by members of all parties. Mr. Curzon declined to answer; and no one supposed he would answer. But the responsibility is there put on the right shoulders. A Minister, and a Minister alone, should be the judge of whether a question should or should not be replied to. To delegate that responsibility to the clerks at the Table is equivalent to letting the man at the door in a newspaper office judge of the merits of tendered contributions instead of the editor.

It struck me that one of the keenest remarks in connexion with this controversy was made by Mr. Gibson Bowles. He said that it was idle to talk about the indiscretion of a question. It was only in the answer that indiscretion could be committed. The Government has been declining to answer questions even when they have survived the scrutiny of the Table more than ever of late. One of Mr. Curzon's replies to Mr. Yerburgh, a Tory member, was a model of his style. He said that part of the question referred to matters of fact, and so the answer could be got from other sources; and part to matters of opinion, on which he, of course, would not pronounce! That is to say, "Find out," and "Shan't tell you!" And if members cannot ask about facts and opinions, what can they ask about?

This policy of the "closed mouth" with reference to the policy of the "open door" has caused deep dissatisfaction and suspicion among the supporters of the Government. The *Times* has been giving information day after day on points as to which the Government profess ignorance. The fact is the Government have nothing to brag about, and so they say nothing. The Government's political supporters argue that we have had a heavy blow in prestige in the Far East. Russia gets all she wants and we get nothing—that, they say, is about the state of the case, and the Government seem to think that least said is soonest mended.

This grumbling by Tories which I have mentioned has had some effect, however. A little information has been dribbled out, and on Monday when Sir Wm. Harcourt said that he thought the Government should make some statement before the Easter holidays about the position of this country, he was cheered by not a few of his opponents. And Mr. Balfour, who is now Foreign Secretary, acknowledged that it was absolutely necessary that "something should be said before the holidays." It is not likely to be much, however, for the Government fell back on that fine old refuge for Ministers in distress, the unavoidable delay in the preparation of the necessary papers. Anyone who knows the House of Commons will recognise the phrase. The delay is always "unavoidable," papers are never ready—except when Government has scored a success.

This matter of questions and its relation to foreign politics in the Far East has overshadowed everything else. There was one speech during the week which should be studied and pondered over by those who are so ready to talk about this great and Christian nation. I refer to Mr. Davitt's horrible and haunting speech about our prison system. He speaks from inside knowledge, and his picture almost equals Dante's "Inferno." What impressed me most was his reference to the senseless brutality of the crank and the treadwheel as contrasted with the more enlightened methods of our colonies and almost all continental nations. And worse than all, the scientific starvation. Mr. Davitt said he had seen men again and again at Dartmoor eagerly gnaw putrid bones and eat old candle-ends taken from a cess-pool! There are those who dismiss such details as disgusting. So they are, but the vileness is in allowing the thing to occur, not in reporting it to the world. A thing which is too bad to talk about is too bad to be permitted to take place.

Some very strong things were said by Mr. Vicary Gibbs on Tuesday night about the action of the Indian Government in connexion with the monetary system of that country. He declared we have robbed the Native of 37½ per cent. of his savings, and been able to do so because of the Native's ignorance. He added that it is not more reputable to sneak a penny from the hat of a beggar just because the beggar happens to be blind, with which remark as a general proposition I suppose most fair-minded men will agree. The whole subject, however, is a puzzle to the average man, and I therefore waited to be enlightened by Lord George Hamilton. It was a vain hope. I never, in all my life, heard a more hopeless, helpless, floundering and stumbling performance than the Indian Secretary's. It consisted chiefly of repeating things he had been told by this man and the other, and he repeatedly

assured the House that his informants understood the subject. The assurance was needed, for no one would have imagined that to be the case from his repetitions of their remarks. It all ended in an agreement that further enquiry should be made.

The House of Commons is a fine place for contrasts. Wednesday had been somewhat dull and quiet until the last ten minutes were reached. Then the scene changed, and there were peals of more boisterous laughter and resounding, almost ear-splitting cheers, more deafening than I have ever heard there before. It arose in this way. At the last minute the House somewhat unexpectedly went into committee on the Irish Surnames Bill, a Bill introduced by Mr. Macaleese to grant Irishmen the right of using the prefix "O" or "Mac" before their surnames. The Irish Attorney-General declared that the two clauses granting this right were unnecessary, as there was no statute which forbade an Irishman's using them, shedding them, or using them again just as he liked. Roars of laughter greeted this, and then, strange to say, the same law officer moved to insert words repealing such parts of any statute as did forbid their use. Up jumped Mr. Macaleese. He is an elderly man, small in stature, and desperately in earnest. Moreover, his simple, honest and kindly disposition has endeared him to all. He denounced the Irish Attorney-General in a manner worthy of a Hebrew prophet invoking woe upon a sinful land. His reception was tremendous. Members shouted themselves hoarse and laughed so uproariously that the glass ceiling seemed to be in danger of being cracked. I despair of describing the scene when the hon. member wound up by moving to report progress—and thus wrecked his own Bill. There was a hurricane of applause and laughter that can only be termed Homeric for want of a better word.

CHRONICLE OF THE WEEK.

THURSDAY, March 24.—Considerable discussion took place in the House of Commons as to the circumstances under which questions relating to foreign affairs were refused by the officials at the Table, or were not answered, when submitted by members. Sir William Harcourt declared that there was no question more important in the interests of the House and the country, and he contrasted the measure of discretion exercised by Ministers in the House and outside the House.

Mr. Morley, speaking at a breakfast given to Liberal agents at Leicester, referred to various anomalies in the electoral law which it was desirable to remove as soon as possible. The present seemed to him to be a time of reaction not only in this country, but in many other parts of the world; but Liberalism represented forces which were indestructible and hopes which were inextinguishable. He called attention to the extraordinary vacillations of the public mind and our public instructors as to our attitude in respect to the various complications with foreign Powers, about which we were all so anxious. In these vacillations, which arose naturally out of the complexity and variety of our interests, there was an element of danger; and he urged that all should do what they could to steady the public mind.

The Pekin correspondent of the *Times* said that the Chinese Government agreed on Wednesday to all the Russian demands. China conceded a lease of Port Arthur for 25 years as a fortified naval base; a lease of Ta-lien-wan for a similar term as an open port and terminus of the Trans-Manchurian Railway, with the right of fortification; and the right of Russia to construct a railway from Petuna to Ta-lien-wan and Port Arthur on the same terms as were stipulated in the case of the Trans-Manchurian Railway.

No bulletin as to Mr. Gladstone's condition was issued, but callers at Hawarden Castle were informed that he had passed a good night, and that the neuralgic pains were less acute.

FRIDAY, March 25.—The Pekin correspondent of the *Times* telegraphed that his reference to Ta-lien-wan on Thursday should have been an "ice-free" port and not an "open" port, but that Russia undertook that the port should be open to the ships and commerce of all the world with the same tariff as a Chinese treaty port, although the administration and collection would be in Russian hands. The balance of the Customs collected at Ta-lien-wan was to be handed over to the Chinese Government after the payment of expenses. He also stated that, according to the Chinese, Japan had withdrawn her opposition to Russian action regarding the Leao-tong ports, Russia having undertaken to withdraw her financial adviser and military instructors from Korea, and to abstain from attempting to obtain in that country any advantages opposed to Japanese interests.

Rumour was busy in consequence of another long Cabinet Council, which, after an adjournment, was concluded in Mr. Balfour's room at the House of Commons. The condition of affairs abroad continued to have a disturbing effect on the Stock Exchange and the foreign Bourses.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer had arranged to receive a deputation of textile workers of Lancashire and Yorkshire who wished to urge the desirability of arranging an international agreement on the monetary question; but, on learning that the deputation was associated with the issue of a printed protest charging the Government with having "broken their solemn pledges to the country" in reference to the opening of the Indian mints, the right hon. gentleman declined to receive the deputation, who accordingly left unheard.

The report of the Commission appointed by the United States Government to enquire into the "Maine" disaster was received at Washington. It declared that the explosion was caused by a submarine mine.

Mr. James Payn, the well-known novelist and essayist, died at his residence in London. He was born in 1830.

SATURDAY, March 26.—All the British warships at Hong Kong were reported to be taking in full supplies of coal and ammunition. They had orders to prepare immediately for sea. M. Pavloff, the Russian Chargé d'Affaires at Pekin, received an intimation from the Tsung-li-Yamen practically acceding to the Russian demands. It was stated that several important modifications had been made in Russia's original proposals.

The result of the polling at Maidstone was declared. Mr. Cornwallis, the Conservative candidate, was elected by a majority of 178 votes over Mr. Barker. At the last contested election, in 1892, the Conservative majority was 816.

The University Boat Race was rowed in a heavy storm. The Cambridge boat was nearly swamped, and Oxford won easily.

MONDAY, March 28.—The Pekin correspondent of the *Times* stated that the Chinese garrisons had been withdrawn from Port Arthur and Ta-lien-wan and Russian troops landed. The Russian flag was flying at both places. The Japanese Minister had offered no protest throughout the negotiations.

An abstract of the report of the Maine Court of Inquiry was published in Washington. The Court found that a mine was exploded underneath the vessel on the port side; that this caused the explosion of two of the magazines; that the explosion was due to no fault of those on board; and that there was no evidence to fix the responsibility. The Court was unanimous in its findings. In the course of the day President McKinley transmitted the report of the Commission to Congress, along with a Message summarising its purport, and adding that he left it to Spain to take such action as was called for by the circumstances and by the friendly relations between the two Powers.

Lord Salisbury, accompanied by his daughter, Lady Gwendolen Cecil, and Sir William Broadbent, his medical attendant, left London yesterday by the 11 o'clock French mail or Beaulieu, in the Riviera.

Sir Christopher Furness addressed a letter to his solicitors, in which, after reviewing the possibilities of the recount and scrutiny on the York election petition, he said he did not wish to win or keep a seat on technicalities, and therefore he had decided not to proceed further, and thus to save both Lord Charles Beresford and himself much worry and expense. He accordingly instructed his solicitors to take the necessary steps to withdraw the petition.

TUESDAY, March 29.—It was announced that Count Muravieff, Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, had addressed a Circular Despatch to the Tsar's Representatives abroad, informing the Powers that Ports Arthur and Ta-lien-wan, as well as the territories adjacent thereto, had been ceded to Russia in usufruct by the Chinese Government, that these ports would be open to foreign trade, and that the largest measure of hospitality would be extended there to the ships of all nations. It was also officially announced that the arrangement would not injure the interests of any foreign state, and would create a new and very wide market for commerce and industry in the Far East, owing to the Trans-Siberian line, which would connect the extreme points of the two Continents of the Old World. From Pekin it was reported that a feeling of intense dejection prevailed among the Chinese, who regarded the lease of these ports to Russia as the beginning of the end.

Telegrams were received at the War Office and the Foreign Office reporting the surprise and capture of Shendy by gunboats and Egyptian troops, sent up the Nile on Saturday. Mahmoud's reserve force was quartered at Shendy, and, on hearing of the approach of the Egyptians, the Dervishes were drawn up between the river and the village. A flank attack was made by the troops, and the enemy were routed, one hundred and sixty of them being killed. Six hundred slaves were liberated, and a quantity of grain and ammunition was captured. The village of Shendy was burned and the forts destroyed. Thus is civilisation justified of all her children, and the raw world drilled for the march of mind.

WEDNESDAY, March 30.—The St. Petersburg journals were exultant in their comments on the agreement with China. The *Novoe Vremya* declared that Russia entered China as "the standard-bearer of Christian culture and civilisation"; the *Novosti* said that Russia had become the centre of international trade relations; the *Viedomosti* announced that Russia indirectly took China under her protection; and the *Herold* was of opinion that in the presence of Russia's triumph in Eastern Asia, Great Britain must put the best face on a matter which only English envy and spite could make out to be bad. It was reported from Pekin that 2,000 Russian troops had been landed at Port Arthur, and that there were nine Russian warships at that place and Ta-lien-wan.

A Cabinet Council was held at the Foreign Office.

Imperial Parliament.

Thursday, March 24.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE CALCUTTA BAR AND THE NEW LAW OF SEDITION.

With reference to Sir W. Wedderburn's question, reported in our issue of last week, regarding the petition of the Calcutta Bar against the new law of sedition in India, the following supplementary question was asked:

Sir W. Wedderburn: Has the noble lord any reason to doubt that the petition came from the Calcutta Bar?

Lord G. Hamilton: I have no reason to doubt that, sir.

[It will be remembered that Lord G. Hamilton, in his reply to the original question, described the petition as "a letter purporting to be written on behalf of the Calcutta Bar."]

THE NEW CURRENCY PROPOSALS.

With reference to the question reported in our last week's issue, the following supplementary question was asked:

Mr. Maclean: Will the right hon. gentleman submit the proposals to Parliament before action is taken?

Lord G. Hamilton: That will depend on the time at our disposal. Of course, my desire and wish are to elicit as far as we can opinions from all those interested in the question.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN MILITARY PRISONS.

Dr. Farquharson asked the Secretary of State for India if he could state to the House how often during the years from 1890 to 1898 corporal punishment had been inflicted for breaches of prison discipline in military prisons in India.

Lord G. Hamilton: There have been 304 cases, during the years from 1890 inclusive up to date, in which corporal punishment has been inflicted in Military prisons in India for breaches of prison discipline.

"BARBAROUS" BULLETS.

Mr. Dillon asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office on what grounds he held that the use of the Dum-dum bullets was not contrary to the declaration of St. Petersburg.

Mr. Powell-Williams: Because the Dum-dum bullet is neither explosive, nor charged with a fulminating or inflammable substance. I may repeat what has already been stated to the House, that the Dum-dum bullet does not, as a rule, inflict nearly so severe a wound as was inflicted by the Snider bullet.

Mr. Dillon asked the hon. gentleman whether Dum-dum bullets had been served out to any troops directly under the control of the War Office, and who was responsible for the supply of these bullets to troops serving in West Africa.

Mr. Powell-Williams: The Dum-dum bullet has not been issued to any troops directly under the control of the War Office. With regard to West Africa, I must refer the hon. member to my reply to him of the 15th inst.

THE PLAGUE IN INDIA.
PAPERS PRESENTED.

East India (Plague).—Copy presented, of Further Papers relating to the outbreak of the plague in India (No III) (in continuation of [C. 8511]) [by Command]; to lie upon the Table.

Friday, March 25.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

PETITIONS.

East India (Contagious Diseases).—Petitions against State regulation—from Armley and Bristol; to lie upon the Table.

THE OPIUM COMMISSION.

On the motion of Sir Joseph Pease, a Return was granted "of recent Correspondence between the Government of India and the Secretary of State in Council (including Reports by the Local Governments in India) as to the measures adopted to give effect to the recommendation of the Royal Commission on the subjects of the evils connected with Opium smoking in India, and the use of rooms as Opium smoking saloons."

Monday, March 28.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

PETITIONS.

East India (Contagious Diseases).—Petitions against State regulation—from Glasgow, Birmingham (two), Westbourne Park and Holbeck; to lie upon the Table.

THE PLAGUE MEASURES IN BOMBAY.
THE EMPLOYMENT OF BRITISH SOLDIERS.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for India, whether under the regulations of the Plague Committee in Bombay, search parties of British soldiers were employed to visit Native houses, and to enter the apartments even of Mahometan and Hindu ladies who were by custom secluded from the gaze of men:

Whether Lord Sandhurst, the Governor of Bombay, was repeatedly warned that this practice was creating much disaffection, which finally culminated in a terrible riot and a general strike; and had he received any explanation why the Governor only cancelled the orders complained of after the riot had taken place:

Whether the Plague Committee had since resigned:

And, whether the regulations in question were issued by the Governor of Bombay in pursuance of orders from home.

Lord G. Hamilton: Up to March 5, a certain number of specially selected British private soldiers were employed to visit Hindu houses if no objection was raised, but in no case did they visit Mahometan houses; nor did any British soldier, whether officer or private, ever enter the room of a woman of the class referred to in the question.

The Governor of Bombay was never warned that the search operations were creating disaffection, though he was of course aware that all the measures taken to prevent the spread of the plague were unpopular among certain sections of the population.

I have already stated that the order for the employment of British soldiers was cancelled on March 5, four days before the riot began; certain other changes were, I believe, under contemplation when the riot began, and were carried into effect after it had taken place. The Plague Committee has not resigned.

The regulations in question were issued by the Plague Committee under instructions from the Bombay Government, and without previous reference to me; but I was aware of their general tendency, and have throughout supported the Governments of India and of Bombay in taking such necessary measures as circumstances may permit for the prevention and alleviation of the plague.

THE NEW LAW OF SEDITION.
THE COURTESY OF SIR A. MACKENZIE.

Mr. Herbert Roberts asked the Secretary of State for India, whether his attention had been drawn to the reported speech of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, made in the Viceroy's Council on the occasion of the passing of the new Sedition Law on 18th February, and particularly to the comparison of certain classes of the Indian people to the carrion kite and jay:

And, whether, in view of the present state of public opinion in India, in reference to the new Press Law, he would take note of language used under such circumstances by a responsible ruler of an Indian Province.

Lord G. Hamilton: The only mention of jays, kites, and eagles made by Sir Alexander Mackenzie was in a poetical quotation from Lord Macaulay. (Laughter.)

I am not prepared to lay down the rule that members of the Viceroy's Legislative Council are to be prohibited for the future from quoting poetry in their speeches. (Laughter.)

THE ADEN HOSPITAL.

Mr. Moon asked the Secretary of State for India, whether he was now able to state what aid the Government of India were willing to give towards constituting and maintaining a nursing staff at the Aden Hospital, in respect of house accommodation and in respect of maintenance.

Lord G. Hamilton: Arrangements have been made to build and furnish quarters for a nursing staff in the European General Hospital at Aden, the cost being partly met out of donations from the large shipping companies using the port, and from other subscribers. The Admiralty has agreed, subject to certain conditions to contribute one-fifth of this expenditure, and also a fee for each patient admitted from the Royal Navy. The annual cost of maintenance will be defrayed as far as possible from fees and private contributions; if there be any deficit it will be made good from Aden Port Funds.

THE BOMBAY RIOTS.
NO OFFICIAL INFORMATION.

Sir Mancherjee Bhownaggree asked the Secretary of State for India, if he had received by the last Despatches from the Bombay Government any particulars regarding the riots which recently took place in that city; and, if so, would he state the same for the information of the House.

Lord G. Hamilton: No, sir, I have not yet received from India any information concerning the Bombay riots, except by telegram. I have ascertained, however, that a despatch may be expected shortly.

THE NEW LAW OF SEDITION.
PAPERS NOT TO BE CIRCULATED.

Mr. Herbert Roberts asked the Secretary of State for India whether the Papers relating to recent changes made in the Indian Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, and the Post Office Act would contain the debates which took place in the Legislative Council during the passage of those Bills.

Lord G. Hamilton: All the proceedings of the Legislative Council are published and regularly supplied to the Library of the House, where hon. members can at any time refer to them. It does not appear to me, therefore, to be worth while to reduplicate them by laying them on the Table of the House.

Mr. Herbert Roberts asked the Secretary of State for India, whether he would state whether the alteration made in Section 4 of the Indian Penal Code by the new Sedition Law would make a Native Indian subject of the Queen triable in India, after his return to India, for anything supposed to be seditious which he might write in a British journal, or speak on a British platform during his residence in this country.

Lord G. Hamilton: The enactment referred to exactly follows the words of the Statute 32 and 33 Vic., Ch. 98, Sec. 1, which gives the authority to make such a law. The hon. member is as competent as I am to form an opinion whether the authority extends to such a case as he has supposed. If it does, the enactment will also cover the case; if not it will not. I need only add that I do not conceive it possible that such a case should arise.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.
MR. VICARY GIBBS'S MOTION.
WHEN DOES THE GOVERNMENT KEEP A HOUSE?

Mr. Balfour moved "That on Tuesdays, March 29, April 5, and 19, the House do meet at 2 o'clock."

In the course of his remarks,

Mr. Balfour said that as the progress of public business had been

somewhat disappointing, he had to ask the House to allow the Government to encroach on the privileges of private members so as to permit them to take morning sittings on the three days mentioned.

Mr. VICARY GIBBS appealed to the Government to reconsider their decision to take a morning sitting to-morrow. The subject for discussion—the unsatisfactory condition of monetary affairs in India—aroused the greatest interest both in the City of London and in India, and it was quite impossible for those who had a right to be heard to give expression to their opinions in the short space of an evening sitting.

Sir W. HOULDSWORTH joined in this appeal.

Mr. PARKER SMITH suggested that the scheme which the Secretary of State for India had promised to publish should be considered before any resolution on the subject was brought before the House.

Mr. MACLEAN pointed out that the resolution which was to be brought forward to-morrow had nothing whatever to do with the "economical heresy" to which the hon. member opposite referred. He joined in the expression of regret that the Government had found it necessary or convenient to take to-morrow away from them. He did not speak selfishly in the matter, because he supposed that, as the Government would promise to make and keep a House, the hon. member who proposed the motion would be likely to get a hearing. He would second the motion, and they would be followed by a Minister in reply, and those three speeches would about exhaust the whole time at their disposal. (Laughter.)

Mr. BALFOUR: My hon. friend who has just sat down has indicated that the three hours available to-morrow night for discussing this question will be divided into three equal portions.

Mr. MACLEAN: No, no. I promise not to take more than twenty minutes. (Laughter.)

Mr. BALFOUR: I understood from my hon. friend that the three speeches would take up the three hours, and if that were the case I am afraid the task which he puts on the Government of keeping a House would be likely to be a little more difficult than it otherwise might be. But I can assure him and my hon. friends who have spoken in the same sense, that I share their regret that the discussion on Tuesday must necessarily be a relatively brief one. I quite agree that the question is one of the greatest importance, and that the House might advantageously spend more than three hours in its discussion, but, when my hon. friend the member for Manchester implies that the result of taking Tuesday morning will be that some decision will be taken on the subject without the matter being thoroughly investigated, I think he cannot have had in his mind the answer given by my noble friend the Secretary for India to a question put to him a few days ago. I do not wish to anticipate the three speeches which will be made to-morrow, but I might remind my hon. friend that the Government are pledged to an enquiry into the whole matter, and that we shall be the last people to suggest any great change in so vital a question as the Indian currency without due and full examination.

AN INDIA OFFICE BILL.

India Office (Store Depôt).—Bill "to empower the Secretary of State in Council to purchase lands in connexion with the Store Department of the India Office," ordered to be brought in by Secretary Lord George Hamilton and Mr. Hanbury.

India Office (Store Depôt).—Bill "to empower the Secretary of State in Council to purchase lands in connexion with the Store Department of the India Office," presented accordingly, and read the first time; to be read a second time to-morrow at two of the clock, and to be printed. [Bill 156.]

Tuesday, March 29.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

COPPER COINAGE IN INDIA.

Mr. STRAUSS asked the Secretary of State for India the face value of the copper coins coined in India, since the closing of the mints to silver, and the quantity of copper used for that purpose.

Lord G. HAMILTON: The face value of the copper coins of the Indian Government coined at the Indian mints during the four years from 1893-94 to 1896-97 inclusive was Rs. 46,46,333 the value of the copper coins which were coined for other governments was Rs. 4,39,336. The amount of copper used in the manufacture of coins for the Indian Government during the period was, approximately (allowing for waste), 6,200,000 pounds. It is not possible from the information that is available to show what proportion of the copper coinage for 1893-94 was struck previously to the closing of the mints. No information as to the coinage of the year 1897-98 is yet available.

INDIAN RAILWAY CAPITAL.

Mr. TOMLINSON asked the Secretary of State for India whether he could say what amount of capital were Indian railway companies expected to raise in London this year under guarantee from the Government, and without such guarantees.

Lord G. HAMILTON: The amount of capital which Indian railway companies are expected to raise in London during the financial year 1898-99, under the guarantee of the Secretary of State for India in Council, is £2,273,000. I have no information as to the amounts that may be raised by the non-guaranteed companies.

THE NEW LAW OF SEDITION.
MORE EVASIVE ANSWERS.

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN asked the Secretary of State for India whether he would postpone approval of the new Sedition Acts just passed at Calcutta until the House of Commons had an opportunity of considering whether these Acts had the effect of curtailing or interfering with the liberty of the Press in India.

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN also asked the Secretary of State for India whether his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Sedition Acts recently passed in India allowed the district magistrate to try political cases in which he was himself the complainant, and empowered him to require from editors security for good behaviour under the chapter relating to vagrants, suspected persons, and habitual offenders:

And, whether he would disallow these provisions, as infringing his declaration that the law would be practically unaltered.

Lord G. HAMILTON: In reply to the two questions of the honourable baronet, I may remind him that the Acts to which he refers having been duly passed and having received the assent of the Viceroy, are already a part of the law of India, and will remain so unless I shall advise the Queen to disallow them. As soon as I have received the authentic copies of both these Acts which the law requires to be sent home, I will cause copies to be presented to Parliament, and, as I have already stated more than once, shall be perfectly ready to be held responsible for any advice which I may think fit to give.

THE MONETARY SITUATION IN INDIA.

MR. VICARY GIBBS'S MOTION.

COMMITTEE OF ENQUIRY GRANTED.

Mr. VICARY GIBBS rose to call attention to the present unsatisfactory condition of the monetary affairs in India, and to move:—"That a Select Committee or Royal Commission be appointed to consider the monetary condition of India and the effects of closing the Indian mints to silver on the different classes and interests affected thereby, to report on the suggested establishment of a gold standard in that country, and to make such recommendations as they may think fit." He said he had put on the paper a perfectly colourless resolution, but he hoped, before he sat down, to show the House that the closing of the Indian Mints was a criminal blunder, and that the attempt to put India upon a gold standard would produce greater evils and dangers than those which it attempted to remedy. He was not prepared to say what was in the mind of the Government of India in closing the mints, but, whatever their object, it was clear that they had thought out no settled plan. If any measure in this world demanded for its justification the fact that it was part of a well-considered, well-matured, and well-thought-out and feasible plan for putting India upon a stable basis with regard to her currency, it was this one. Five years after that mad experiment was made, the Indian Government, in their despatch of September last, wrote:—"The measures to be taken when the transition period has passed have not been laid down." Was it not appalling to realise the levity with which this step was taken? No plan, no consideration, nothing except the one idea that they might be able to pay their gold debt in England, never minding who suffered for it. He had had innumerable letters from Bombay, Calcutta, Burma, and Ceylon, showing the effect of this step on the commerce and on the rayat of India. These letters all told the one story of the fearful financial position into which India had been brought by this experiment—a 12 per cent. rate of discount and as much as 24 per cent. per annum paid on the security of gold bars in the bazaars by the Natives. The position was appalling. Nobody could trade successfully in a condition of chronic panic, and that was the position to which India had been reduced. It was not merely a question of a monetary 12 per cent. rate, but it was a question of an average rate of discount steadily rising as the Indian Government approached what they were pleased to call their "eve of success." It needed no great financial expert to tell them that if they reduced the amount of the coinage indefinitely, they would produce a scarcity value. That was not success. That was effecting for a time the commercial paralysis of the country where such steps were taken. The Government of India had failed in one of its primary objects, which was to create a stable exchange. The fluctuations from 1894, when this experiment was first enforced, to 1897 had been precisely the same as they were from 1884 to 1889. They had been at the rate of 11½ per cent. Ever since this experiment began the "forward" rate of exchange had always been materially lower than the "spot" rate. That was a very great measure of the confidence of commerce in the power of the Government to bring to a successful issue this fantastic experiment. It was lower to-day, and the Government had dealt a heavy blow at the producing power of the community. If a low rate of exchange tended to stimulate production, then artificially raising the rate must tend to check production and drive it into other countries. He would give an example—the figures with regard to opium before this experiment and after. The figures for the nine months ended December 31, 1897, showed 43,000 chests of opium, valued at Rx. 4,000,000, while for the nine months ending December 31, 1893, the figures showed 53,000 chests of opium, valued at Rx. 6,000,000. That would show one of the economic aspects of the case. The result had been that the Indian banks, the moment the rupee reached 1s. 3d. or thereabouts, had hurried to get their money out of the country, and thereby increased the monetary stringency and increased the mischief the Indian Government had caused. No one would dispute that the hoards of silver, uncoined and coined, were enormous in India, and that the uncoined silver, as far as the poor of India were concerned, vastly exceeded the coined. What had been the effect on the poor peasant? In 1893, with an open mint, for every 180 grains of silver that he tendered he got one rupee, or 16 annas. With a closed mint, with the present price of silver, for the same number of grains of silver he got 10 annas—that was to say that the Indian Government had taken away by legislative Act, without warning or notice, from the very poorest class of her Majesty's subjects about 37½ per cent. of their hoards. He maintained that there was a case for enquiry. It was a grave allegation to make, but he made it fearlessly, because he knew it could not be disputed. Would the Secretary for India say that for every penny the Indian had lost in his silver he had gained in his rupee? What profit was it to the Indian that the rupee should have increased in its gold value? Would the Scotch or English farmer say "Thank you" if they told him that his sovereign would buy more

rupees than it did last year. Therefore, on the same analogy, why should the Indian care whether his rupee would buy more gold? What he desired it should buy was more food for his belly and more clothes for his back. It had been urged outside Parliament that the Indian had not realised the wrong done to him because it had been "smudged up" in a question of currency. But the conveyance of other people's property did not cease to be a conveyance because the Indian had not found it out. Whether he found it out or not, we had cause for shame, and if, and when, he found it out we might have cause for fear. What had been the result of the action of the Indian Government since 1893? That it had increased the taxation of the people of India 60 per cent., added 22 millions to the gold debt, and the Government were face to face with a deficit of nine millions. If that were true, was anything more needed to condemn British rule in India as a miserable and ghastly failure? It might be said that the end justified the means, that all that had been done was worth doing in order to give India a gold standard. But could India get a gold standard? Could she keep a gold standard? Could she afford it? What would be its cost to her and to us? It might be suggested that the enormous increase in the proportion of gold would render a gold standard possible; but it was a curious commentary on that statement that the amount of gold in the bank to-day was materially less than it was two years ago, and he was very doubtful whether the increased production would do more than meet the demands of foreign Powers for gold. (Hear, hear.) But could India keep a gold standard? Had Japan kept it? There was an excellent object-lesson in Japan. There was another matter he would like to bring to the attention of the House, and that was the duty, the interest, and the competence of Parliament to deal with this question. (Hear, hear.) First as to the duty, the right hon gentleman the member for Wolverhampton said they were all members for India. They were all members for India, and the House had a responsibility in that respect which it could not shirk without loss of credit and character. (Hear, hear.) It was the duty of the House to see that the people of India were justly treated and that their wrongs were remedied. The House had an interest in the matter, because it was perfectly well known that India's debts and obligations were our debts and obligations, and that we could not cast her adrift financially any more than we could politically. Then with regard to the competence of the House. Was it so certain that it could not form a committee which could hold its own financially, economically, and otherwise with Sir James Westland? Were not the names of Fowler, Lubbock, Beach, and Chaplin (laughter) to be compared with Westland? It was preposterous, it was malignant nonsense (laughter) to represent that the House was not competent to deal with the matter, and he urged that the House should appoint its own committee to consider it, though he would not say for a moment that if the appointment of a committee were left to his right hon. friend he would not appoint a good committee. He had brought grave charges against the Government of India. He charged them with levity, incapacity, and injustice. (Laughter.) Hon. members might laugh, but they could not say that those charges were unsupported by the truth or by the teaching of history, and by the great body of opinion in the City of London, and in India, in Glasgow, and in Manchester. He implored the House to deal as tenderly with the interests of the people of India as if they were their own; to remember and act upon the noble words of the Royal proclamation when we took over the government of India from the East India Company, "In their prosperity shall be our strength, in their contentment our security, and in their gratitude our great reward." He begged to move the resolution. (Cheers.)

Mr. Maclean.

Mr. Maclean in seconding the resolution, said he thought the plan of the Government of India which was adopted in 1893 had failed, but he did not believe that it had caused such widespread mischief as his hon. friend imagined. (Hear, hear.) He did not think the rayat believed that the value of his silver hoards had been so greatly depreciated as his hon. friend thought. A complete answer to a statement of that kind was that India went on cheerfully importing millions' worth of silver every year just as if this regulation had never existed. (Cheers.) He did not approach the subject from the same point of view as that of his hon. friend. He differed with him on many questions of currency, and he had only seconded the resolution because he looked upon it as a practical matter which ought to be dissociated from any ideas or schemes of currency whatsoever, and ought to be examined merely on its merits. (Hear, hear.) When this plan of artificially raising the rate of exchange to 1s. 4d. per rupee was first brought forward in 1893, he spoke against it, at a discussion at the Society of Arts, on the ground that it seemed to be nothing better than a draft of bimetallism which had been adopted by the Government of India in default of getting the legitimate article. He believed experience had shown that the scheme had not accomplished the results which were looked forward to. He did not think the people of India had shown any great feeling on the subject as a body, but the mercantile and banking interests had felt the working of this scheme very severely. He did not join for a moment in the attacks his hon. friend had made on the Government of India for trying the experiment. He had the greatest admiration for the wisdom and courage displayed by the Government of India and the Secretary of State last September in rejecting the proposals which, if they had been accepted, would, in his opinion, have been a great disaster for the British Empire. (Hear, hear.) He should not have come forward now to attack what they had done if they themselves had stood by the position they then occupied, for he should have thought it only fair to grant them some further time to see if this experiment could be carried to a successful conclusion. But since their despatch of September they had passed an Act, which was stillborn from the very commencement, for getting gold paid into the Bank of England against rupees to be issued in India. Again, they had submitted fresh proposals to the Secretary for India and the noble lord had already stated that he meant to inquire into them. Therefore they had departed altogether from the terms of the statement made only a few months ago that they should continue to pursue the policy initiated in 1893 with a view to attaining a stability in exchange. The Government of India admitted themselves that the legislation of 1893 had failed and that some other plan must be adopted. The legislation of 1893, framed on the proposals of Lord Herschell's Commission, was designed to secure two objects—to establish the stability of exchange between India and England and to prevent the competition of silver with Council bills. Neither of these objects had been attained. He always thought that Lord Herschell's Commission was constituted too exclusively. Its members were no doubt men of eminence, students and thinkers, but with one exception they were not men versed in practical business. After reading the report of the Commission he came to the conclusion that he need not have gone much further than the first few paragraphs, which said: "Hitherto the expansion of the revenue has largely provided for the additional calls which the falling exchange has made on the Government of India." That was an exact description of what took place under the old system, when the mints were free to the coinage of silver without any ratio whatever being fixed or attempted to be fixed between silver and gold. The country prospered amazingly, and in a very few years the increase of trade would have more than compensated for the loss on the exchange which accompanied the Government's remittances to this country. (Hear, hear.) But that system was not allowed to continue. The Indian Government had always thought far too exclusively of its remittances to this country and of the loss to the revenue thereby incurred. India had to pay away about one-third of her revenue in expenditure in this country every year, and that expenditure was necessarily measured in English currency. It was necessary, therefore, that the Finance Minister should look very carefully to the means by which he could provide that money. But what he complained of was that the Indian Government had looked exclusively to that, and had not considered the effect on the general trade and prosperity of the country of any changes which might raise the rate of the rupee, and so lessen what the Indian Government had to pay for sending its remittances home. The Government of India had not been sufficiently informed by what he might call the commercial instinct, and the result was the miserable conclusion we had come to after all these years, that the rate could only be supported at 1s. 4d. by borrowing money in England. From an answer of the noble lord's he took it that the real deficit on the year now coming to a conclusion was between eleven and twelve million crores of rupees, if they included the four millions borrowed in this country towards meeting the home charges. The noble lord had been obliged to stop the joint Council bills in India in order to maintain the rate at 1s. 4d.

Lord G. Hamilton: No, it is quite the other way. The expenses of the famine made the cash balance so low that we did not call upon it. It was not for the purpose of the exchange at all.

Mr. Maclean said he quite admitted there were exceptional circumstances this year. The Finance Minister had estimated that he was going to remit 16 millions sterling from India during the next year, which meant perhaps Rx. 35,000,000. Did the noble lord imagine that the country would be able to draw 16 millions sterling in Council bills during the coming year at the rate of exchange which was now maintained?

Lord G. Hamilton: Certainly.

Mr. Maclean said the noble lord was more sanguine than he was. He considered the rate had been only bolstered up by these sterling loans which had been raised in this country. He admitted that what the noble lord had promised to do robbed the resolution of a good deal of its importance. He had promised that an enquiry should take place, that the documents should be published, and that he would undertake if possible to lay them before Parliament before any new proposals were carried into execution. But, with all respect, the noble lord laboured under a strange delusion if he imagined that the establishment of a gold currency in India would get rid of his financial difficulties. So long as the revenue was paid in silver, as it necessarily must be, the Treasury in India must be filled with silver, so that the state of that Treasury would be no further advanced by the establishment of a gold standard. It was not a question on which any man would like to dogmatise, but his own personal experience was that the old system of keeping the mints open to the unlimited coinage of rupees, without fixing any ratio whatever, and leaving the money to find its own level, was the best. He thought that the best tribunal that could possibly be appointed was a Parliamentary Committee. (Hear, hear.) They had recent experience which showed that a House of Commons Committee was not altogether a satisfactory tribunal for finding out the truth when political feeling was concerned—(Opposition cheers)—but where political feeling did not exist he thought there was no better tribunal in the world. He hoped the noble lord would not bind them down to a Departmental Committee—(hear, hear)—but if he did appoint a Departmental Committee, he hoped there would be men upon it representing commercial interests, and that the terms of reference would be sufficiently wide to allow of all questions connected with the Indian currency being fairly discussed. (Hear, hear.)

Sir S. Montagu.

Sir S. Montagu said his long experience, extending over half a century, in dealing with the currencies of the world, induced him to take part in the debate. He approached the subject solely from the commercial point of view. Although a bimetallist, he did not blame the Indian Government for closing the mints, for he did not know what other course could be adopted in order to prevent the discredited silver of the world being shunted on to India. But the Indian Government were bound to establish a sound currency of some kind in India. The value of the rupee could not rise above 1s. 4d.—the *maximum* which had been fixed by the Indian Government—but it could descend to unknown depths; and the traders with India wanted stability in the currency. What he complained of was that the action of the Government in the matter was fitful and vacillating. If they could not establish bimetallism—which he regarded as the best remedy—because France stood in the way, why should they not do

the next best thing by establishing a gold currency? (Hear, hear.) There were various courses which a Select Committee if appointed might suggest to remedy the unfortunate state of things in India. They might suggest the very best remedy—international bimetallism; or a regular and steady 4 or 5 per cent. rate of interest on discounts in the Presidency banks; the quiet and steady accumulation of gold in India by intercepting the gold coming from Australia and the Cape; making part of the export and import duties payable in gold; and providing that the landowners should pay the land revenue in gold at the rate of 1s. 4d. the rupee. All these courses might attract gold to the Indian Treasury. There was an enormous amount of gold in India at present. The amount was estimated at 300 millions sterling and upwards; and he believed that that estimate was below the mark. If the Indian Government could attract even a fractional part of these large hoards of gold into circulation they could establish a gold currency; and they would then attract to India from Europe the millions and millions of money which were now seeking investment in vain. The only course that could properly be taken would be to appoint a Select Committee to enquire into all the suggestions which had been made. (Cheers.) He hoped that the question would not be burked by being referred to a Departmental Committee, which would not satisfy the interests concerned. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Burdett-Coutts.

Mr. Burdett-Coutts said that he found in this motion a definite danger to the financial stability and the commercial prosperity of India. For five years the Indian Government had maintained the policy of closed mints. At the end of last year they expressed the decided opinion that that was the only prudent policy to pursue, and they avowed their unanimous determination to maintain that policy. The object of this resolution was not to strengthen the Indian Government in that determination, but rather to thwart it. The object was not to set up a gold standard; it was intimately concerned with the policy of bimetallism. In this country financial responsibility and public confidence had been built up on the integrity of the gold standard; and that stability and confidence could only be maintained in India by creating there a monetary system similar to that of Great Britain. The House ought first to have a clear definition of the scope and object of the Committee referred to in the resolution. Was it too much to say, after all that had happened, after the report of the Herschell Committee, and India had closed her mints for five years, supported by her Majesty's Government, that it would stultify both the Indian Government and her Majesty's Government to go back on the policy, and that it was impossible to accept a committee which should have in view the object of changing it? The only basis on which the committee could be accepted was to investigate the currency of India, with a view to supporting the present policy of the Indian Government. He knew there were various conflicting interests connected with the maintenance of a gold standard in India, but there was one paramount interest which was identical to India and to Great Britain, and that was the interest in a rupee that neither falls nor rises, but which is stable to gold. To secure that, although it would take time and trouble, he believed the only sure path was, in the words of the Indian Government, to link the Indian system with that of Great Britain. There were two overwhelming reasons for endeavouring to arrive at the stability of the rupee. In the first place, to his mind the evils of India were attributable mainly to the fact that capital was leaving India at the present moment. Capital was leaving India because there was no confidence on the part of capitalists in the permanence of the value of the rupee, because they were alarmed at the insistence with which so many people were clamouring for the reopening of the mints. India wanted capital more than anything else. To develop the resources of India was a duty which capitalists had always neglected, because they would not entrust their capital to a country whose currency was liable to wide fluctuations. The stability of the rupee was a matter of vital importance in the contribution of sixteen or seventeen millions which India had to pay this country. If the rupee was fluctuating, it was obvious that the Indian Government did not know how many rupees they had to collect from the taxpayers, and hence chaos and confusion in the Budgets and possible discontent and disaffection among the people. On broad lines he submitted that the policy of the Indian Government was the policy which would attract capital to India, which would tend to the stability of the rupee, and which was best calculated to ensure the prosperity and stability of Indian finance and commerce. If the object of the motion, as he believed, was to reverse that policy and to promote the interests of bimetallism, then he said it was a hopeless proposition, because the task assigned to the Committee was that of a *post mortem* examination. Bimetallism was dead; it had been killed by every country; and to grant a Committee with the hope of fanning a breath of life into it was simply to waste the time of the House of Commons. ("No," and cheers.)

Mr. Wylie.

Mr. Wylie, who had an amendment on the paper to the effect that the House being satisfied that the Indian Government has been and is giving due consideration to the monetary condition of India, should "await further communications from the Indian Government before taking any steps in connexion with this subject," said that on certain conditions he was a supporter of bimetallism. While he did not think that the motion was in the interests of bimetallism, he was almost certain that it was not in the interest of India, because it would tend to weaken that confidence in the stability of Indian money which lay at the root of the problem, and which the Indian Government had been doing so much to establish during the last five years. No Government in recent times had been compelled to face such a severe monetary problem as the Indian Government. While the extreme men on the one side wished the rupee to fall to its bullion value of about 10d., and the extreme men on the other side, would have liked to see it restored to its old standard of about 2s., the Indian Government chose the happy medium of 1s. 4d. Having sanctioned this policy, Parliament was bound to see that it had a fair opportunity of being thoroughly tested, and five years was too short a period for testing such a drastic financial experiment. He contended that already it had been attended with a great measure of success. Notwithstanding the great fall in silver, the Government had been able to maintain the rupee fairly stable at 1s. 4d., and that during a period when India was subjected to a terrible famine, a most disastrous pestilence, and a very expensive war. They could best measure the success of this experiment by looking, not at the positive advantages which it had secured, but at the evils which it had averted. If the Indian Government had yielded to the representations of the United States and France in 1893, and had advanced the value of the rupee to 1s. 11d., then, judging from the experience of the rapid rise of the rupee in 1890, they might safely assert that disaster and ruin would have fallen on thousands of Indian merchants and planters. On the other hand, had the Government allowed it to drop to bullion value, the Indian Financial Secretary would have had to meet an enormous deficit. Increased taxation to the amount of 10 or 12 million crores of rupees would have had to be imposed, and this, in the opinion of the president of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, might probably have caused another mutiny. It would have almost annihilated the importer in India, it would have very seriously handicapped the British manufacturer, and it would have thrown thousands of workmen in the country out of employment. (Hear, hear.) It had been said there was great stringency in the Indian money market, but a 12 per cent. bank rate there was not very much above the normal rate, and in the five years previous to the closing of the mints the fluctuations were even greater than they had been since. He maintained that the chief cause of the stringency in the money market had been not the closing of the mints, but want of confidence in the stability of the policy of the Indian Government arising from the dread that it might be interfered with and over-ruled by the action of the House of Commons. (Hear, hear.) Several banks had withdrawn their capital from India; but if they had known that the rupee would be maintained at 1s. 4d. during the last five years they would not have done so; and, if confidence were restored, British capital would flow into that country like a flood. He did not think that a motion like that under consideration would help to restore confidence. If a special committee or commission were appointed, he did not believe there was a bank in this country that would send its capital to India; and he questioned very much whether any private individual would do so. But given the confidence that the value of the rupee would be maintained at 1s. 4d., British capital, which was seeking investment at rates of interest much below what was being offered in India, would soon fill to overflowing the coffers of our Eastern dependency. That House could supply the requisite confidence, not by a resolution of this kind, which would possibly thwart the policy of the Indian Government, but by a resolution strengthening their hands—a resolution approving their policy, which had done so much for the country and people in a time of storm and stress. The financial policy of the Indian Government ought not to be weak, vacillating, and temporary, but strong, stable, and continuous. (Cheers.) He concluded by moving his amendment.

Lord G. Hamilton.

Lord G. Hamilton: I regret that the exigencies of public business have permitted of only a very short discussion upon this important subject. I think, however, there is still sufficient time to enable me to state very clearly what my views are and what are the intentions of the Indian Government. Let me in the first place congratulate my hon. friend who has just sat down upon his admirable speech—(hear, hear)—a speech which showed real knowledge and grip of the subject, and which was all the more valuable because my hon. friend is largely engaged in trade with India and speaks as a bimetallist, although not as a prejudiced one. The hon. member for Whitechapel and the hon. member for Cardiff have made speeches with which I find but little fault. As far as their demands are concerned, I believe I can satisfy them, for I feel that before any alteration is made in the monetary system of India there should be a thorough and impartial enquiry. I should be sorry to attempt to decide without enquiry upon so controversial and intricate a subject as the monetary system of India. I cannot, however, approve the tone or substance of the speech of my hon. friend who moved this motion. In one respect I must congratulate him. We are discussing the dullest of all subjects—an abstract currency question—and my hon. friend managed to use in his speech more exciting language than I ever heard before, even in an Irish debate or in any debate upon a controversial subject in this House. If my hon. friend succeeds in getting a Select Committee appointed, and if those who differ from him were to give evidence in similar language, whatever other solution is arrived at, I do not think it will be a pacific one. (Laughter.) I was not responsible for the closing of the mints, and my hon. friend wishes to bring those who were responsible before a committee. I have looked most carefully into the history of the matter, and it is my belief that placed in the circumstances in which they then were—circumstances of very great difficulty—those who were responsible adopted the right course, and I shall not hesitate to say so. (Hear, hear.) It is not an abstract question whether it is right or wrong to close the mints; we must take into consideration the circumstances with which they had to deal. Believer as I am in bimetallism, having been a convert 25 years ago, I had a good deal to do with starting the organisation which has since developed itself. The object of bimetallism is to establish a stable rate of exchange between gold and silver money, and the object of anybody who takes an interest in Indian finance is to try and bring about that stability of exchange. It is my belief that if that ever can be established so as to induce capitalists to invest their money in India with the knowledge that they will get it back at very much the same rate, I know no bounds to the productive prosperity of India. (Hear, hear.) How is it possible to establish that stability of exchange between England and India? It might be done by an international agreement, and theoretically that would be the best plan, but the world unfortunately does not agree. (Hear, hear.) We have not to deal with individual opinion, but with the opinions of the world.

Twenty-five years ago when the fall in the price of silver took place, largely due to the action of Germany in closing her mints after a period of seven years, from 1870 to 1877, a certain number of nations demonetised silver and adopted a gold standard, and foremost was Germany. For thirteen years there was a cessation of the movement, but in 1890 it began again, and since then Roumelia, Austro-Hungary, Chili, Bulgaria, Russia, and Japan all adopted a gold standard. Now, we must look facts in the face. I believe at this moment there are only two silver-using countries, Mexico and China, and, believing as I do in bimetallism, and not having abandoned the theory, I think it is obvious that we cannot carry out that theory of establishing a stable exchange between England and India. There has been no blame of the Government for rejecting the proposal made in the autumn for reopening the Indian mints. It was obvious to anyone who looked into the matter that the proposal would not obtain the stability it was its object to secure. A Government can give an artificial value to silver in circulation only on one condition—that of keeping restriction on coinage of silver. All nations can open their mints to free coinage, but the value of the coins will be that of the intrinsic value of the metal they contain. The proposition made to us was that the ratio of silver to gold should be 15½ to 1. But the market ratio was 35 to 1, and if the wishes of Governments come into contact with the universal law of supply and demand that law will prevail, and the ratio of 15½ could not be sustained. If we ever enter into an international arrangement that does not achieve its object we shall be in a worse position than before, for we shall have all the inconveniences of instability of exchange while having tied our hands and fettered our liberty of action. (Hear.) I will go so far as to say—and I speak my own opinion, and I think of every one connected with the Indian Government—we do not believe that circumstances now exist for entering into an international bimetallic arrangement, because no such arrangement would be worthy of being called international that did not include France, and France would only accept a 15½ ratio. The population of France is 11 per cent. of the total population of Europe, but its currency is 28 per cent. of the total currency of Europe. When that is subdivided, the note circulation is 6½ per cent. of the total circulation of Europe; the gold circulation is 25 per cent., but the silver circulation is 40 per cent. In fact, I believe there is a larger amount of silver in circulation in France than there is in the whole of British India. (Cries of "Oh") I go by the statement of the Herschell Committee. At any rate, there is this enormous amount of silver at the ratio of 15½ to 1, and I do not believe that France can accept any other ratio. So long as she adheres to that ratio, you cannot enter into an international arrangement which would be a real international arrangement. That in a nutshell is the position of the Indian Government: and let the House remember that they did not close their mints until after they saw there was no chance of an international bimetallic arrangement. Another fact which my investigation has brought to my mind very strongly is that I do not believe it is possible for any one nation by its own exertions to rehabilitate silver. America made a tremendous effort in 1890 by the Sherman Act. By that Act the United States Government were compelled annually to buy fifty-four million ounces of silver whether the currency of the United States wanted it or not. That fifty-four million ounces of silver is about 30 or 40 per cent. of the silver production of the whole world. America continued that operation for three years, and at the end of those three years silver was 6d. lower than it was before. (Hear, hear.) That shows clearly that no one country can by its own unaided exertions rehabilitate the price of silver. Under these conditions what was to be done? What was the position which the late Government had to face? I do not want to use language too strong, but India was unquestionably nearing bankruptcy. (Hear, hear.) She could not pay her way, and one of two things was inevitable—either that she would be unable to meet her obligations or that this country would have had to come to her aid. What is the plea upon which bimetallists have appealed to the working classes of this country? Is it not that the constant fall in the price of silver raises prices in those countries where silver is the standard, and that in consequence an impetus and bounty is given to the export trade? But if you open your mints you at once re-establish the bounty system on behalf of the exporter which the closing of the mints has taken away from him, and therefore anybody who has made an appeal as a bimetallist to the working classes of this country to get rid of the bounty which the fall in silver gives to the exporter must vote against the reopening of the mints in India, because, if those mints were opened, that bounty which they have denounced would once more be established. The exporter wants a cheap rupee. Everyone who exports produce from India likes a falling rupee, for the reason that it raises prices. But there is always an interval between the rise in the price of the commodity and the rise in the wages of those who engage in producing the commodity, and the exporter gets the benefit for the time being. (Hear, hear.) It does seem to me absolutely inconsistent in the whole theory and principle of bimetallism that those gentleman who have been holding up the iniquity of this bounty system should now ask to reopen the mints and re-establish it in full vitality. (Hear, hear.) My hon. friend expressed in very strong language the terrible commercial, monetary, and economic condition of India as it exists at the present time; and he stated that this had been entirely produced by closing the mints. He only gave one set of figures in support of that statement, and those were in connexion with the export of opium to China. No doubt there has been a great falling off in the export of opium to China, but that was always foreseen when the area of opium cultivation in China has, decade after decade, been extending; and I was glad to think that my hon. friend, with all his industry, was only able to refer to opium as an argument that India has become impoverished under this system of closed mints. I have taken a great deal of trouble to see how far the predictions of those who are opposed to the closing of the mints have been verified. It was stated that the result of the closing of the mints would be to reduce the area of cultivation. The area of cultivation has not diminished in India. The price of staple commodities remains very much the same; the value of exports has not fallen; the prices of exported produce have not fallen; and the prices of imported produce have increased. It was predicted that the trade of India with silver-using countries would fall further. So far from that being the case, according to the last returns the volume of trade with silver-using countries was 26 per cent. for the whole of India, whereas previously it was only 24. If I wanted any proof that India was not ruined by the present monetary system it is given by the extraordinary recuperative power she has exhibited in recovering from one of the greatest disasters that have ever visited any country. No doubt money is dear in India. I do not wish to dogmatise on this point, but it seems to me that dearness of money is not identical with scarcity of currency. I think the dearness of money is caused by want of capital, and the cause of want of capital in India is no doubt due to the sufferings of that country from drought, famine, plague, and war. There is another influence at work. I think one mistake in closing the mints was in trying to fix the rate at which the rupee is converted into gold. The rupee could not rise appreciably above 16d., but could fall below. The result has been a great depletion of money from the banks. What would be the result if the mints were opened? I have had enquiry made as to what the difference would be between the number of rupees remitted at the present rate in exchange and the number which would have to be remitted at the market rate of silver at the present moment. That difference amounts to about 15 crores, or £6,000,000 sterling. The Indian Government must pay its way; and it could not pay its way in that state of things except by increased taxation. It cannot increase its taxation, and therefore it could not pay its way unless it received help from this country. If additional taxation were put on here, it would be put on those who are subjected to unfair competition in India, and so the community here would get hit right and left. (Hear, hear.) But that is not the only objection. If there were any idea of the mints being opened there would be at once a general disturbance of prices and a continuous fall in the value of the rupee, and a general spirit of apprehension and mistrust would be set up, which would be absolutely fatal to the investment of capital and to the development of commerce, or trade, or any sustained enterprise anywhere. (Hear, hear.) I cannot conceive what reason any one can give for arguing that the mints in India should be opened without an international arrangement, except that if the mints in India were opened it is just possible that it might be a stepping-stone to some international arrangement. But I am not prepared myself to make so dangerous an experiment in the hope of the realisation of what I must call a visionary idea. I want it to be distinctly understood that so far as the Indian Government are concerned, both here and in India, we believe that an attempt to open the mints without some international arrangement being come to would be an act of lunacy—(hear, hear)—and therefore I should be very sorry to be associated in any way with an enquiry which might lead to a reversal of the policy established in 1893. (Cheers.) Now, sir, I quite agree that there should be an impartial enquiry into any proposals the Indian Government send home, and that any such enquiry must be retrospective. The enquiry must not be limited to the scope of the Indian system, but those who conduct it must have the power to investigate the monetary system of England. The body intrusted with the enquiry should not be composed mainly of officials. (Hear, hear.) I think it is most desirable that gentlemen of experience in connexion with India whose names carry weight should be asked to participate, and I think they ought certainly to be more in number than the officials. (Hear, hear.) I am prepared to state on behalf of the Government that such shall be the composition and scope of the enquiry into the proposals the Indian Government have sent home, and I am anxious for my own sake that the enquiry should be made as soon as possible. There are many systems in force in different parts of the world, but their success does not depend upon their theoretical perfection, but upon the fact that the people have confidence in them, and I feel that no alteration in the system of India could be accepted with general trust and confidence by the community unless the recommendation was associated with the names of men whose opinions would carry weight with the community at large. It is rather difficult to select gentlemen to take part in such an enquiry. I think we do not want to have extreme controversialists, we do not want to have faddists, because I think nothing is more inconvenient in a case of this kind, where the demand everywhere is that a decision one way or the other should be arrived at—nothing is more undesirable than that such an enquiry as this should be an opportunity for gentlemen of extreme views to fight one another. (Cheers.) At the same time it is desirable that, while we get gentlemen associated with banking and commercial interests, we should try and not put gentlemen on with too direct a personal interest in the exchange one way or the other. Such being the views of her Majesty's Government, I cannot accept the motion of my hon. friend for the reason I have given. It would be quite impossible for me to do so, but I am prepared to move this as a substitution: "That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that a further enquiry be made into the monetary system of India, and into the proposals of the Government of India for the establishment of a gold standard in that country." Of course such a committee would have power to make recommendations. I do not propose to have recourse to a Select Committee, because it is obvious that you have a much wider selection of experts if you do not confine the enquiry to members of this House, and I do not propose to have recourse to a Royal Commission, because a Royal Commission is a somewhat cumbrous form of investigation. But what I would propose is a committee, not being a departmental committee in the sense of being composed mainly of officials in the India Office, but a committee having all the powers and all the attributes of a Royal Commission, and which is simply put in that shape because that is a handier and I think a more effective instrument of enquiry. (Cheers.) I have stated to the House what the views of the Indian Government are. We cannot assent to the proposal of my hon. friend, and I cannot hold out on behalf of the Government any hope that we shall reverse the policy established in 1893. My hon. friend

thinks that the currency system in India can be put on a better footing than that policy; but I, on the other hand, look forward and hope to be able to consummate the policy which was commenced in 1893. (Cheers.)

Sir W. Harcourt.

Sir W. Harcourt: The noble lord was good enough to say that he would leave me some time in which to address the House. That was unnecessary, because he has made a better speech than I could have made in defence of the policy of 1893. There is no doubt what that policy was; it was an experiment, and a necessary experiment, in the condition in which India was placed. No doubt the Government of India approached that experiment with prepossessions in favour of a different course; but they have recorded in their despatch their conviction that that policy was right, and that it was better than an international bimetallic policy. (Hear, hear.) Well, this is satisfactory for the Government of India, but still more satisfactory is the voice of Balaam that we have heard to-night—(laughter)—who confesses that he always has been, and still is, a bimetallist by conviction. I can only express my regret that that speech was not made somewhere about the month of July, 1895. (Opposition cheers and laughter). It would have been extremely useful in Lancashire and in the agricultural constituencies. But better late than never; and I am glad to see that it has carried conviction to the colleague who sits by his side (Mr. Chaplin)—(laughter)—and to the First Lord of the Treasury.

Mr. Balfour: In what respect?

Sir W. Harcourt: The arguments which he has used are the arguments we have been using —we, who belong to the majority of the world (laughter)—against the professors for I do not know how many years. But, in spite of all the professors, the world is against the faith that the noble lord still holds. I am delighted to hear that he has vindicated the Government of India against the language, in my opinion absolutely unjustifiable, employed by the mover of this resolution. In his concluding words the hon. member charged the Government of India with levity and incapacity for adopting a policy which I venture to say has been proved by experience to be absolutely necessary to rescue India from impending insolvency, and in that I am supported by the speech of the noble lord who has just sat down. I am not going to trouble the House with arguments about the currency. The sort of speeches we want to hear are not speeches on currency by the professors, but speeches such as we heard from the hon. member for Dumbarton, who spoke with practical knowledge of the questions which have to be decided. The hon. member is the sort of man we want to conduct enquiries of this kind. I do not agree with him, however, that an enquiry would shake the confidence in the Indian Government. I believe the enquiry would establish the soundness of the policy which has been adopted and which I hope will be continued. We have listened to appeals on behalf of the poor people of India, who are said to have been injured by the closing of the mints. That is a most mischievous argument, and it is an untrue one. (Hear, hear.) It has been said that these poor people in the time of famine had to sell their silver ornaments and that they could only get half their value. If any one is disposed to give in to that mischievous delusion I would ask him to read the most important report written by Mr. O'Connor on the trade of British India. He shows that it is absolutely untrue that these silver ornaments have been sold at reduced prices to the injury and discontent of the poor people of India. That is proved by the fact that silver is being imported into India. Of course, if those ornaments were sold, there would be a plethora of silver in India, and there would be no necessity to import silver into the country.

Mr. Parker Smith: Will the right hon. gentleman give us the date of the report?

Sir W. Harcourt: It is dated 1897, the year of the famine. The noble lord said that no one would condemn the Government for having rejected the proposals which were made to them by the Governments of the United States and France. The noble lord said truly that no international agreement could be made except upon a basis and ratio of 15½ to 1. We have the statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with which I agree, that a proposal of that kind was incompatible with the public interest—that, in view of the present market price of silver, to fix any such ratio would be an act of absolute dishonesty to creditors. It was felt that the opening of the mints at such a ratio would mean the disorganisation and ruin of the whole trade of India. I have heard strong language of condemnation of such a proposal having come from the Governments of the United States and France. Yes, but they were not the authors of the proposal; they were invited to make such a proposal, and very much surprised they were when they found that it was summarily rejected by the Government of India and by the British Government. And why were they surprised? Because in 1896, three years after this measure was adopted, which the noble lord says was necessary to save India from bankruptcy, the First Lord of the Treasury pledged himself that the Indian mints should be opened without any reserve whatever in regard to the ratio at which it was to be done. The right hon. gentleman said: "We will reopen the Indian mints; we will engage that they shall be kept open; and thereby we shall provide for the free coinage of silver within the limits of the British Empire and among a population greater than that of France, Germany, and Belgium together." This declaration was undoubtedly greatly to the satisfaction of the people of Lancashire. The right hon. gentleman gave the pledge without consulting the Indian Government, and when it was consulted the proposal was absolutely rejected. Then we have the United States making this extraordinary proposal which was summarily rejected as inconsistent with any honest obligation to the Indian Government. The United States naturally thought that, after the right hon. gentleman's pledge, the proposal would be accepted; and they were extremely astonished at, and they rather resented the violence of, the language used here to describe their proposal. The proposal of the noble lord to-night is perfectly satisfactory. In such a difficult question as the establishment of a gold currency in India there ought to be investigation by experts and practical men. If it could be obtained it would be of great use to this country and to India. I think the substituted motion a very proper one, and I shall give it my support.

Mr. Wylie asked leave to withdraw the amendment.

After the Speaker had put the question and declared the motion to be withdrawn, there were Nationalist cries of "No."

The Speaker said the objection came too late.

Mr. V. Gibbs said that he would withdraw his motion in favour of that which the Secretary of State for India had promised to move.

As, however, the Nationalist members again objected to the withdrawal,

Lord G. Hamilton moved his motion as an amendment to that before the House.

The motion thus amended was agreed to amid cheers.

Wednesday, March 30.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

PETITIONS.

East India (Contagious Diseases).—Petitions against State regulation; from Stirling, and United Presbyterian Church of Scotland; to lie upon the Table.

THE INDIA OFFICE STORE DEPOT BILL.

On the motion of Lord G. Hamilton it was ordered—That the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills do examine the India Office (Store Depôt) Bill with respect to compliance with the Standing Orders relative to Private Bills.

Thursday, March 31.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE TOCHI VALLEY.
WHERE IS THE FRONTIER?

Mr. Arthur O'Connor asked the Secretary of State for India, whether the Tochi Valley, in Waziristan, was regarded as within the British frontier; and, if so, how, when, and by what authority the transfer was effected.

Lord G. Hamilton: The Tochi Valley is within the external frontiers of India, and its inclusion was recognised by the Kabul Convention of 1893.

THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE IN INDIA.
THE DISABILITIES OF INDIANS.

Sir William Wedderburn asked the Secretary of State for India, whether there were any appointments in the Indian Educational Service which were specially reserved by the new scheme for persons appointed in this country, and which persons appointed in India were precluded from holding:

Would the Secretary of State give a list of those appointments:

And, was there any rule or regulation precluding persons appointed in India from holding those appointments previous to the adoption of the new scheme in 1896.

Lord G. Hamilton: As I stated on the third of this month, the effect of the new scheme upon the Indian Educational Service has been to transfer to the Provincial Service certain high appointments hitherto filled by nomination in this country, thus practically reserving them for natives of India. As regards the appointments reserved for persons selected in this country (who, as I explained, may be natives of India) I regret that I cannot give a complete list; but, subject to the deduction of those posts which have been transferred to the Provincial Service, they remain, practically, as they were before the introduction of the new scheme.

The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointment of Sir John Edge, Q.C., to be a Member of the Council of India, in succession to Sir Charles Turner, K.C.I.E., whose tenure of the office expired in February last.

The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointment of Mr. Lewis Addin Kershaw, Q.C., to be Chief Justice of the High Court of Judicature for the North-Western Provinces at Allahabad, in succession to Sir John Edge, who resigns the office.

Mr. L. A. Kershaw, Q.C., is a member of the North-Eastern Circuit, and was called to the bar at the Inner Temple in November, 1872. He was made a Q.C. in 1895.

The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointment of Mr. Charles Montgomery Rivaz, C.S.I., of the Indian Civil Service, to be a member of the Council of the Governor-General of India, in succession to Sir John Woodburn, K.C.S.I., on his appointment as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal.

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